THE ENCHANTMENT OF ART

DUNCAN PHILLIPS

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The Enchantment of Art

This is the crown and triumph of the artist,
not merely to convince but to enchant.

R. L. STEVENSON

The Enchantment of Art

As Part of the Enchantment of Experience

Essays

By

Duncan Phillips

With Frontispiece in Colour
And Eight Reproductions

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TO

MY MOTHER

NOTE

THE author thanks the Editors of The International Studio — Scribner's Magazine — The Yale Review, and Art and Progress, for their permission to reprint the essays which first appeared in their pages.

PREFACE

This is a book of frankly personal appreciations. Apparently it is about art. Actually it is about my own life, some of its finer moments when the enjoyment of artistic beauty made it wonderfully well worth while. Art is a personal matter from beginning to end, from the personal mood that precedes an original creation to the last word of personal opinion passed in comment upon it. Perhaps no act of mind is more personal than criticism. And this is especially true when art is concerned, for no subject is more controversial.

Some art books are historical. Others are technical. This one only claims to be personal — and persuasive. Without apologies for recommending my own tastes and opinions I have sought to bring other men and women to my way of thinking, about truth and beauty, about life and art. Briefly, the purpose of this book is the purpose of art itself; to stimulate the appreciation of life and to intensify the joy of living. If I have written chiefly about painting and books, and only English books at that, it is because I had to draw the line somewhere.

But the Enchantment of Art is a subject as big as life and as enduring. Even if we are to live forever I am very sure that we cannot exhaust its possibilities.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of my friend, W. H. deB. Nelson, in the preparation of this book.

DUNCAN PHILLIPS

New York

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We're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.

. . . . . .

Art was given for that.

ROBERT BROWNING — "FRA LIPPO LIPPI"

Book I

The Enchantment of Art

I

THE IMPRESSIONISTIC POINT OF VIEW

I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days,
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make,
And joy in the making;
Although to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.

ROBERT BRIDGES

ART I suppose is all very well for those who like it," concedes the scoffing materialist, "but what is the use and what is the excuse for art criticism? What do you mean, to begin with, by the words art and beauty?"

Well, let us be humble about language and consider what we do mean by these words art and beauty. Even in the haziest of our human conceptions art is usually associated with the idea of beauty, and beauty with the acknowledgment of those pleasures in our lives, pleasures partly sensuous, partly spiritual, which have lifted us in

a sort of ardour of appreciation out of ourselves, at least for moments. But art we know is more than mere beauty in the abstract. Art means not necessarily the doing of beautiful things but the doing of things beautifully. Much work however that is beautifully done is not art but just skilled labour. The beauty that constitutes art means much more than mere creation, however successful, for a creation only becomes a work of art when it represents a genuine emotion on the part of its creator and is so conceived and so expressed as to communicate that genuine emotion to others. The craftsman turns out a beautifully made chair in accordance with a given pattern, but the thing has been done rather for the sake of the thing than for the sake of its beauty. It is a good job, but no more a work of art than the novel or play or picture that is made in the same impersonal and utilitarian way. Of course, if beauty were a fixed object that could be known and explored and described like a mountain, then we could all be artists. But frankly, beauty cannot be reduced to any given formula, nor can it possibly be defined in words. It is not a matter of facts at all but of concrete emotional perceptions often produced by sheer physical sensations. In dreams we are at times conscious of a strange glamour that seems wholly unrelated to our experience, a veritable chaos of jumbled thoughts, forgotten images of the past, unspoken hopes and fears for the future, all in a

setting that is the wildest of creative imagination. Of such personal and fantastically insubstantial dream-stuff is the mystery of life and its offspring the mystery of beauty. We can no more make all people appreciate the same beauty than we can make all people dream the same dream. Beauty is as vague and various and variable as human personality itself. Emphatically then we cannot lay down laws for art, which is the soul's chosen and trained method for expressing its sense of beauty. But just as emphatically we can and should formulate rules for assisting us in the practice of the innumerable kinds of artistic expression demanded by the innumerable kinds of human taste. And one truth at least is true for all people and at all times. Art, to *be* art, must be sincere, and the expression not merely of sense, or sight, or sound, but, back of all that, the expression of the individual soul.

"But," shrilly protests the scoffer once again, "granted the artist, why the art critic?" Because the critic represents perception and appreciation, without which there would be no art. First of all there must be perception of that abundant beauty "in the rough" which, in our large way, we call by such names as reality and nature. The child sees beauty about him and loves it, although he does not know it for what it is. That is the stage of pure perception. Sooner or later to receptive souls appreciation comes, like a miraculous awakening to a life of

new sensations. On the horizon of some lives this æsthetic radiance never dawns, and they are left in darkness, bereft of one of the richest joys of existence. To others a mysterious power is granted to express their sense of beauty, to become artists. The majority of us are without this power, although many of us are more truly artists in feeling what we cannot express, than hosts of expert craftsmen who glibly express what they do not feel. Feeling is the soul of art. Technique is only its machinery. It is, therefore, the appreciation of life which results in the expression of art and to help us enrich our lives by the cultivation of our tastes and æsthetic faculties, that is the exalted purpose of all art criticism.

The *appreciation of life*, is not that worth while? not life in the abstract, but our *own* lives, our *own* experiences, our *own* moods and emotions? Stirred with very real reverence we are constantly exclaiming one to another — how wonderful is our world! Few are the scientists, few also the moralists, who fail to impress upon us our insignificance in the stupendous scheme of things. Of what avail are our petty strivings after this and that, our feverish desire for we scarcely know what. Every poet has urged us to come out into the night where stars that are changeless and serene preside over the mysteries of the dark. How all our vain philosophies are shamed beneath those stars! And how helpless

is our knowledge and impotent our power while the storm god has his way with us and the chill wind of death blows wheresoever it wills! Truly it is fitting that before Nature's god we should worship and bow down. But suppose that we carry this reverence to its logical conclusion. Suppose we say one to another — how wonderful we are, you and I! How wonderful that we have eyes to see the beauty of the stars, and ears to hear the terror of the storm, and souls which at the blowing of the wind of death are wafted all invisible into the dark beyond. Suppose we dwell upon our common merits as men, and our supreme fitness to inhabit and inherit the earth. Suppose, even suppose we admire our peculiar merits as individuals, the features of our faces which, search the world over, can never be found again; the particular combination of opinions and beliefs, aspirations and passions, tricks of speech and habits of thought which, distinguishing us for better or worse from any other mortals that ever lived, bear witness to the inscrutable miracle of personality. By all means let us burn incense before all the shrines of nature, but in so doing remember that we are but fulfilling one of the thousand impulses of our imperious being; that we do not exist for nature but nature for us, to give us something plastic to mould to our desire, something static for the beginning and end of our wisdom, something dynamic to charge us with the will to live, the will to conquer, something to

copy with art, or worship, if we will, as religion. And if we are to be humble let it be because we fall so far short of our possibilities as sentient, potent beings in a world full of work and joy. Standing erect with pride in the consciousness of what we are, we may then proceed to the realization of what we could become, through serious purpose to devote ourselves to self-study, self-development and self-expression.

The purpose of life then is the expression of self. In order to truly live, it is needful to freely *give* one's life, without pretense and without reserve. Doubtless the noblest expression of self is self-sacrifice. As for art, it is but one of many mediums for personal expression. Its function is to discover and celebrate beauty and truth, treasures that are supposed to abound on every highway and byway. But is it not the secret of modern art that these treasures exist not without but within — within the seeing eye, the informing mind, and that mystical inner life of sacred sensibilities which we call the soul? From the favoured few consecrated to art, offerings of beauty and truth are prized by the world in proportion to the amount of personal taste with which they have expressed their sense of beauty and of personal wisdom with which they have been enabled to grasp and give forth truth. Individuality has been, and will we believe continue to be, the criterion for success in modern art. There is no statute book of truth, no positive definition of

beauty. Both terms are relative, things of our own conception and of our own making. Unless we find in art personal testimonies and individual conceptions, beauty and truth may be stated with all copiousness and care, but to no greater effect than the repetition of the names we give to them. Unless we derive the benefit of sharing the personal vision of an exceptionally sensitive pair of artist-eyes, we much prefer to do without art and see the world for ourselves. And so we demand that art shall be the more or less adequately accomplished record of personal impressions. Otherwise the ablest craftsmanship that the schools can teach will be of little avail.

That such opinions as these can be to-day so generally accepted, proves, I think, that we are very far removed from the spirit of antique art, with its intellectual simplifications and its allegorical abstractions. Nevertheless, the formula of Greek beauty survives, and is in fact one of the perils that beset the adventurous path of the young artist in his quest of the personal impression. The definition of ideal beauty to which the Greek sculptor brought the inspiration of his clear perception and of his restrained æsthetic ardour can command no real response from our age. But the marbles are in our museums, the casts in our schools, and they remain at once the inspiration and the despair of young idealists, and, in many cases, the ruin also of their talents. Those of the modern men who try to realize what

the fair dream of antiquity has meant to them, to give shape to their imaginative conceptions of Hellenic charm, have studied their classic models as they should be studied, and absorbed all they need of the serene passionless spirit and the lofty sense of style.

In the Theocritan landscapes of Réné Ménard our eyes delight to wander with the shepherds over the tranquil meadows where the brown cattle graze, to mark the clean-cut outline of the dark oak forests against the luminous horizons, and the drift of cream-colored clouds mirrored in the pale river-waters. This is not the landscape of Sicily as it now is, nor as it actually was in the days of the Sicilian poet whose pastorals it suggests; rather the landscape of a modern painter's dream, representing a thrill of perhaps as vital consequence as any that a bygone age can communicate to modernity. And yet for every artist who, in this fitting, modern way, pays tribute to that far-off inspiration, there are a hundred who rhetorically repeat sleek Aphrodites, achieving, instead of the ideal beauty which they seek, unjust mockeries of the Classic spirit and self-revealing denials of our complex modern world. Shall we ever learn that the selection of grand themes from ancient lore cannot endow modern craft with the qualities of Greek art? Tradition should not be despised. If sincerely reverenced, it may powerfully affect what we have to say. Rodin's realistic sculpture

PLOUGHING
By Réné Ménard

shows the unquestionable influence of the unleashed-primitive imagination of Notre Dame Cathedral, and of the awe-inspiring individuality of the prophetic Michel Angelo. Nevertheless, as Mr. Brownell insists, Rodin is neither Early Gothic nor Florentine Renaissance. He is, heart and soul, a French impressionist at the dawn of the twentieth century. The modern art that dares not assert its independence from Greece and Italy, and dares not speak its own thought in its own way, reveals degeneracy. There is more truth and more real beauty in a rough sketch from nature, executed at hot haste in the glow of a moment's pleasure, than in all modern pseudo-classicism from David to Cabanel. And I would rather see a clever caricature dashed off with enthusiasm, and originality of mind and eye, than a vast space decorated with inaccurate recollections of Raphael's lovely faces, and the flying figures of Tintoretto.

It is entirely natural that we should become impatient and intolerant of those so-called artists who squander rich talent for the sake of display upon borrowed and laboured themes for which they have the most tepid interest and in the production of which not a hint of their personal observation or emotion can be detected. Nevertheless, in art as in life, there are men who try to express their very true observations and their very deep sense of emotion in the presence of beauty, but who are either without the inborn talent necessary to

success, or else are unfortunate in lacking that element of distinction, whether it be power or charm, which all artists should possess who would attempt to impress others with their impressions. For the failure of such as these there can be only sympathy. Charm, it must be admitted, plays the most important part in personal impressionism, and the artists of charm, they are the lucky ones of this earth. Under the spell of such men as Vermeer and Chardin and Cazin, of Herrick and Lamb and Robert Louis Stevenson, we must admit that it is the *manner* of seeing, feeling and transcribing beauty and truth which constitutes what we call art, and that the choice of subject should be left to the temperamental inclination of the artist.

As long as there are a thousand temperaments abroad in the world there will be a thousand different styles of art for a thousand different tastes, and no critic in passing judgment upon them can speak for anyone but himself. I may quarrel with the great Monet and other dashing French innovators in landscape painting — the men improperly called Impressionists — claiming that there is actually too little personal impressionism in their work, that they care more for the means than the end, for scientific truth than æsthetic beauty, and that their selection of subjects is too haphazard — like the kodak snapped at random. Nevertheless I am willing to admit that their faithful study of the outward appear-

ances of nature in all sorts and conditions of atmosphere and their insistence upon taking Nature off her guard and exactly as she is have resulted occasionally in capturing, more closely than ever before, fleeting illusions of reality. And so I can readily understand that to those who regard realism as the be-all and end-all of representative art, such startlingly naturalistic effects are preferable to the atmospheric but none the less idealized landscapes of Corot, a master who cared more for the spirit than the substance and strove ever with a single mind to give form to the lyric rapture with which tender twilights and blithe spring mornings thrilled his soul. It is all in the point of view. What is life? we ask. "One damned thing after another," says the Fool. "A series of definite and successive changes, both of structure and composition, which take place within an individual without destroying its identity," says the Wise Man. "A blur of vivid impressions," says the artist. That is what life means to him. Why a blur? Because the artist insists upon focussing his attention on one thing at a time and everything else is a blur at that moment. As Walter Pater put it — he wishes "to define life, not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not a universal formula for beauty or truth, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation."

In another chapter of that remarkable book

"The Renaissance," Pater says: "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face. Some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest. Some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real to us for that moment only. . . . We are all condemned to death, with a sort of indefinite reprieve. We have our interval and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness — others in high passion — the wisest, at least, of the children of men, in art and song. . . . For art comes to us professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to our moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." That is the best declaration I have ever seen of the motive which governs and guides the representative arts, and as many also of the presentative arts as either make their appeal directly to the senses like colour, music and dancing, or strive solely for such concise and graphic effects as we find in some lyrics, prose sketches and stories.

"Our moments as they pass" — how we waste them! The beauties that come and go with the moments — how insensible we are to their coming and going! Once gone they may return to us in memories, with the intensified emotion of dream-like things. Yet in their turn the memories fade and the beauties are no more. Art is a means of giving permanence to our moods and memories, of restoring to us, something at least of the

original charm of a sensuous influence that has touched our lives in passing. Is it not wonderful that a few familiar words of our daily speech may be so selected and arranged by a poet in a sequence of four lines, that our hearts are made to beat a little faster? The epigrams of our American poet Aldrich can work this wonder.

> See where at intervals the firefly's spark
> Glimmers and melts into the fragrant dark,
> Gilds a leaf's edge one happy instant — then
> Leaves darkness all a mystery again.

And the following lines may make some of us catch our breath:

> Two things there are, with memory will abide
> Whatever else befalls while life flows by,
> That soft, cold hand-clasp at the altar side,
> The thrill that shook you at your child's first cry.

To feel the romance of our brief existence, to delight in the loveliness of little things, surely this is to live intensely and increase one hundredfold our capacity for living. The fleeting mood; the fugitive fancies that, in Browning's phrase, "break through language and escape;" things that vanish, and fade, and sink into the depths of silence; such incorporate and impermanent things impressionistic art perpetuates.

Now the theologian and the scientist, the philosopher and the epic poet, the dramatist and the novelist, the historian and the statesman, the merchant and the financier, each in his larger or smaller way, tries to grasp life in its entirety.

The worth of the flying moments may or may not have impressed him. At any rate it is the serious business of life which absorbs his attention, the eternal verities and some or all of the separate standards. Meanwhile the artist is standing by, watching the world as it passes, appreciating time as it flies, as responsive to every influence and experience as a violin to the touch of a master, striving to give his sensations and his moods emotional unity in his mind, and then artistic unity in his creation — in short, to give definite form to each separate, personal impression. Such, then, is the impressionistic point of view.

II

WHAT IMPRESSIONISM IN PAINTING REALLY MEANS

WHAT does Impressionism in painting really mean? After some forty years of agitated discussion, there exists in the public mind a confusion amounting to bewilderment in regard to the proper answer to that question. The reason is not far to seek. Critics have been provocative and entertaining, according to their fashion, with a truly journalistic contempt for any short cuts to the truth. They have played with their subject as a cat will play with a mouse, to prolong the pleasurable excitement. George Moore, for instance, pounced upon the truth when he said that "Impressionism penetrates all true painting" and only "in its most modern sense signifies the rapid noting of illusive appearance." Yet he allowed the thought to escape that he might play with it upon some other occasion. What is the result? Ask the average well informed man you meet what Impressionism in painting really means, and he will reply somewhat as follows — "Oh — it's a new-fangled French way of painting everything light and airy, and of spilling all

the colours of the rainbow — helter-skelter into the same picture."

While resenting the flippancy of the gentleman's manner, the most enthusiastic critics of the new spectral vision could hardly quarrel with the truth of this statement. When urged to a definition of the same subject, Camille Mauclaire proceeds to describe industriously the technique of colour spots invented by Claude Monet in his attempt to render the shimmer of aerial vibration. Now this method is a typical achievement of the modern mind. Suffice it here to say that successful as it has been in producing upon canvas subtle varieties of light and air, it is at best a brave but crude beginning and only an experiment in the evolution of realistic painting. So engrossed is the painter with his melted outlines, his divided tones, his coloured shadows, that his picture too closely resembles a scientific demonstration. "Coloured stenography," Huneker called it. It seems hardly credible that learned critics can present any one technique as the embodiment of impressionism, and to the average mind the word seems altogether too big for mere technical adventure, however important. Yet by the common consent of painters, critics and public, Monet, Degas and the rest of that group are *the* Impressionists. The perplexing question is, wherein lies their right to a monopoly of the title? Opinions, moreover, seem to be divided whether these artists are Impressionists because

of their methods or because of their motives. Most writers agree with M. Mauclaire that the innovations of palette and brush have earned them the distinction, for these, at least, are indisputably new. Inconveniently, however, the methods of the several painters, invariably grouped together, are widely dissimilar. Some laid their paint on in gobs, others in thin washes. If Pointillisme be Impressionism, how can Degas and the earlier Manet claim kinship with Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro? If, on the other hand, this little band of men are Impressionists because they have been drawn together to express, each in his own way, transient aspects of contemporaneous reality, how can we forget that the expression of contemporaneous reality has been the unchanging purpose of true realists from the very earliest day? As for the transient aspects, the new regard for effects of life and light in passing, these things constitute one of the valuable contributions of modern art. But the realistic principle dates back to Giotto. Can it be that learned critics, in cramming impressionism into a new, small pigeon hole, have only thickened the fog of misunderstanding that envelopes the name?

It is the general belief — a belief difficult to wholly eradicate, that impressionism is peculiarly modern and that, being modern, it consists very naturally of egotistical specializations and adventurous experiments in technique. Now in the

first place we forget that other times besides our own have possessed enquiring minds. It is inherent in the nature of man to be curious and experimental. He begins in the cradle by investigating the mystery of his toes, and he ends by dabbling with Nature's elemental forces, also with philosophy and machinery and art. Da Vinci wrote learnedly about perspective and coloured shadows, and for him, as Pater observed, "the novel impression he conveyed, the exquisite effect he created counted as an end in itself — a perfect end." What could be more modern in subtlety of suggestion than the Mona Lisa, with her watchful eyes, her slow disquieting smile and that fantastic background of blue-green rocks and interminable rivulets? As for Rembrandt's soul-searching shaft of golden light that is but another early instance of the craftsman spirit — delighting in the production of "effects" — a spirit destined in our time to become so dominant and so contagious a force. But in the second place, the true impressionism is not solely concerned with technique — nor is it the gospel of either art for art's sake or truth for truth's sake. In the last analysis — it is the soul of the painter that counts. Cold imitation, be it ever so perfect, will result in a statement of fact such as we may find in any book of reference. Somehow it seems strange to us that we ourselves, we of the blundering fingers and of the thousand jangling opinions, should be of importance in æsthetic judgments.

And yet without us — Nature would be wholly negligible. The world is what we make it, and what is called Natural Beauty is only what we conceive to be beautiful. The personal and spontaneous impression therefore is requisite in realism no less than in romance. A painting may be a perfect marvel of realistic imitation yet unworthy to be called art, because lacking the artist's testimony of impression.

In the Walters Collection at Baltimore we may see side by side two small but characteristic canvases by Alma Tadema and Millet. The former is entitled "The Triumph of Titus." It is a triumph of technique. The cold and lustrous sheen of the marble stairs and the variegated textures of apparel and ornament are copied in detail with unerring exactness. The imitation is astoundingly perfect. The adjacent Millet represents a flock of sheep huddled by night in their fold. They make but a shimmering blur under the misty moon. Nothing is described, nothing defined. And yet somehow — we can see the restless stirring of the sheep, we can feel the chill of the air, and we are overpowered by the poetic illusion. Now both these pictures are realistic, each in its own way. The way of Tadema was an elaborate and painstaking prose, whereas Millet's picture is endowed with the directness and simplicity of poetic inspiration. Tadema arrived at his knowledge of Titus and his time through toilsome years of study; Millet

saw his vision of the sheep-fold one night and transcribed his impression before his brain was cool. Tadema employed the facts he found in books; Millet the secrets he learned from Nature. Tadema, the scholar, painted, with fastidious precision, colourful chapters of ancient history; Millet, the poet-painter, with spontaneous and sublime carelessness, the peasants from whose midst he came, their fields and flocks, their labour and their love. Both men were realists; Millet was also an impressionist.

It is my firm belief that impressionism is not a transient technique, but an ancient and abiding faith, not merely the sensational production of some revolutionary modern painters, but one of the basic principles — and the one true philosophy, of all painting. In its larger and more vital sense, it is the artist's rule of self reliance, ordaining that transcripts from nature be made, not with too scrupulous a devotion to objective truth and photographic accuracy, but of necessity through the personal observation of the painter; refracting, most effectively, his individual point of view, and perpetuating, most recognizably, his spontaneous impression. The never resting mind of man is constantly recording emotions and sensations from the myriad phases of our mutual existence. As many as are the eyes that see, the hearts that feel, the brains that formulate their conception of visible or intangible things, so many are life's real impressionists.

The value of their impressions varies according to their understanding. Even among those whose talents seek expression in the arts, there are all kinds of impressionists, from the men of lofty genius on the mountain peaks of inspiration, the Michel Angelos, and the Rembrandts, to the horde of petty craftsmen who labor in sterile moorlands with unavailing and uncouth endeavour. Midway upon the scale are the radical, experimental Frenchmen we have been discussing. They are so enamoured of the appearances of objects under diffused or conflicting lights, so absorbed in the striving to render visual sensation, that nobility of theme seldom disturbs them. They are impressionists to be sure. But they represent merely the most recent stage in a gradual and logical development.

That astute critic R. A. M. Stevenson, was, I think, the first to point out that Impressionism in the sense which is commonly accepted to-day received its original impulse from the supreme Velasquez. This is acute criticism. Velasquez represents in the history of painting the force of inspired initiative, asserting its independence from traditional limitations, and achieving at a bound the goal of its endeavour. To him Stevenson attributes the practical demonstration of that vital principle which ordains that objects should not be painted as they are known to exist, but as they *appear* to the momentary and more or less abstracted gaze, under ever changing conditions

of light and air. As a definition of the impressionism of nineteenth-century realists, we shall see how this utters indeed the last word. However, if the critic had regarded impressionism as an eternal principle rather than as a modern practice, he would have taken for his model not merely the brilliant advances which Velasquez made upon the knowledge of his time, but the complete genius of the man, inclusive of those instincts for decoration and self-expression which he inherited from his predecessors. His Shakespearian immensity lay in his perfect mastery of the dual nature of his art, the decorative and the representative, both interpenetrated by his taste for colour and line on the one hand, and his vision of his model on the other.

Let us, then, formulate new conclusions, at the sacrifice, perhaps, of favourite theories. In the first place, impressionism cannot be said to represent any one technique nor any one way of viewing nature, but rather, all artistic achievements, whatever the method, in which sincere, spontaneous, and forthright impressions are convincingly expressed through the art conceived by the brain and the craft designed by the hand. In the second place, impressionism is by no means solely concerned with the naturalistic portrayal of transient aspects of contemporaneous reality. It is quite as high an art and a much more difficult one to give form and substance to one's fleeting impression of intangible beauty; to

sound with Whistler a chord of colour; to incarnate with Watts a powerful thought; or to perpetuate with the painters of old Japan a vanishing dream. Romance yields her impressions no less than realism. Thirdly, impressionism is not new and strange but marvelously old. Stevenson said that to visit Velasquez at the Prado was to shatter one's belief in the modernity of modern painting. He might less cautiously and quite as accurately have stated that many centuries before his great Spaniard, far back in those dim ages of æsthetic dynasties, at the other end of the world, there existed in China and Japan an art of landscape painting which contained the essence of impressionism, that is, an art in which the means of expression were harmoniously adapted to the artist's individual emotion. For after all, impressionism is synonymous in equal measure with art itself, which is purely technical, and the motive that makes for art, which is, or should be, inspirational. In its only logical sense it means the concise expression, through concrete symbols or suggestions, of single, personal impressions, both realistic and romantic.

III

VELASQUEZ — "THE ENCHANTER OF REALISM"

EDMONDO DE AMICIS, in his book on Spain, confessed that he stopped at the entrance to the Prado Gallery in Madrid to ask himself, with fast beating heart, what good he had ever done in life to deserve the wonderful joy that was in store for him. I remember how I laughed at the emotional Italian. Yet, when I stood on the threshold of the great Velasquez room, and beheld out of the corners of my eye the masterpieces of the supreme master of modern painting, something of the same emotion came to me. I expected so much that I feared disillusionment, I braced myself for the shock. But the precaution was unnecessary. It was almost better than the banquet — that preliminary relish I took of general impression. I seemed to be in the midst of a stately, gloomy life, at least two centuries behind the times, and yet as real to me as the present, and far more vivid. For suddenly I experienced an endowment with exceptional powers, so that I could see the intense *beauty of truth* and of all truthful appearances, as if for the first time. Chardin, it is true, had given me moments of similar delight, with his

little pictures of blue and yellow grapes, blue and creamy crockery, peaches, red wine, gray walls and copper kettles, all suffused with the magic of real light and inspired observation. And, of course, I had raved over many a Frans Hals, the bloom of a plump cheek, the kindling laughter of an eye. But Chardin's touch idealized and Hals' brush improvised. It is Velasquez alone who realized reality and left it more real than he found it. Not a face, nor a hand, nor a background but was literally true. I found very little beauty in the commonly accepted sense of the word in that Velasquez room at the Prado. I found chiefly men, women and children, of the unmistakable Iberian cast, with which I was already familiar; arid brown plains and broad blue distances, such as may be seen from the car window to-day as one approaches Madrid; glimpses of rooms seen dimly at first behind figures of a period when dress was particularly bad, and people, dreary people, either of royal blood, or satellites of the sombre Court, from the arrogant Prime Minister to the piteous dwarfs, idiots and buffoons who supplied the amusement when time dragged wearily within the musty walls. Only a Court painter then was this Velasquez — a person who painted pictures to order as the tailor produced liveries. And yet, as I looked from portrait to landscape, from a great decorative battle scene to a greater representation of things as they once appeared, I knew

that I was face to face with the mystery of genius — that compound of "original seeing, intellectual courage and some gift or other of expression," that genius of eyesight which enables us to see things as we never could have seen them before, and to find beauty where we did not know that beauty could exist.

It is commonly supposed that to appreciate Velasquez one must be either a painter or a special student of painting, that since there is so little beauty of subject to be found, the beauty must be entirely in the way the things are done, in short the technique. This is indeed true. Velasquez is the modern painter's painter, and the paragon of all the virtues which the more enlightened art schools teach. Yet, these virtues are not just for the emulation of the few. They make for the larger life of the many. To demand that pictorial art should be altogether subject or altogether sentiment, but without style, is the same thing as to expect a man to be altogether body or altogether spirit, but without that mind which alone can make body and spirit effective. Some people dislike technique, because they consider it too material. Yet, as Stevenson was fond of repeating, "Without matter there would be no stuff in which imagination could create an image." A picture without distinction of visual, structural, or technical character, is like a man whose natural powers of body and spirit have been rendered helpless by sheer lack

of mental discipline. Whether we care to admit it or not, art implies technique, which simply means the method of doing a thing well. Of course, no matter how well a thing may be done, it must be done with a joy and a purpose, otherwise it will not be worth doing. If that zest were really lacking in Velasquez, we could hold him responsible for all the soulless virtuosity practiced in the name of "Art for Art's Sake." But this is not true. It was because this artist loved life's actualities with a love surpassing that of the idealist that he was not only able to depict things truthfully, but with a beauty that belonged to his own mind and soul. Velasquez was neither unemotional nor even impersonal. On the contrary, he was a reverential devotee of Nature and her secrets. He insisted upon going to Nature with an open mind — free from formulas and preconceptions. His idea of pictorial beauty was not to make an arbitrary design to improve upon Nature, but rather, through powers of personal discrimination and discernment, to select from Nature the forms and colours of our visible world itself, the sights that are so inevitable a part of our waking existence, and which may be so indispensable a part of our inner consciousness.

Although "Las Meninas" is the most wonderful picture in the world, we may prefer the more sumptuous and splendid "Las Lanzas," better known as "The Surrender of Breda." This picture bridges the gap between the decorative realm of

Italy and Rubens, and the modern art of Raeburn and Constable, of Corot and Manet. Velasquez was demonstrating that magnificence of pictorial decoration could be made without falsifying the scene represented. Such is the power of suggestion when expressed by a great artist's selection of only what is significant, that the action or arrangement of the few figures and horses on this conspicuous hilltop, the glimpses we get of the distant battlefield and its smouldering fires, the hedge of pikes and lances held at rest, these details satisfy the mind at a glance of the exact situation between the two armies. Some of the soldiers of the foreground stare at us with disconcerting curiosity, but the chief actors in the scene are intent upon the business in hand, rather anxious to have it over with, this ceremony so trying to both conquered and conqueror. We admire the sense of impulsive magnanimity with which Spinola receives the key of the city. The story then is clearly and attractively told, and yet the purpose of the picture is purely and frankly decorative. Note the arabesque of lances against the sky, the landscape stretching miles and miles, the dull red of the soil steeped in a veil of bluish atmosphere, the pattern of flat colour masses, green, orange, chestnut, buff and black. See the canvas from the proper distance and no Titian will seem to you more rich in colour and design. So I say, we may prefer "Las Lanzas" to "Las Meninas" and to every other picture in the

world. But it is not the essential Velasquez. It is a splendid compromise with Italy and Rubens, and the Master is immortal, just because he usually made no such concessions, because he relied implicitly upon his own eyesight and philosophy.

Turn then to "Las Meninas" and let the picture work its will with you. Here is no colour scheme — no balancing of lines and masses. You are prepared to find fault with this picture, because the subject is not concentrated as is customary in the middle plane; because the figures are pushed out to the immediate foreground, and in accentuated light, with darkness above and beyond. Perhaps, according to the schools, you are right; but soon you will be willing to admit that Velasquez was greater than the schools. He knew how to make that empty vaulting and the gloomier recesses of the dark room say just what he wanted most to say. It was thus and thus only that he could give the exact "*flavour* of his impression." This picture was to be a poem on the subdued splendour of *real light*, as it appears indoors. Real light dictated the point of view, dominated the colour and the composition. It is the mystery of real light which makes the harmonious ensemble of this and every other great Velasquez, fusing the colours, modelling the forms, creating the exact thrill of the original impression.

In "Las Meninas" the daylight enters gently at the window across the group of figures. It

blurs a little the figure of the dwarfed woman, who is not only in strong light but out of focus. For, of course, it is the dainty royal child upon whom we look, as she stands with inborn dignity among her attendants. The full light from the window makes the sunward rim of the big canvas shine, the unseen picture upon which Velasquez has depicted himself at work. Note, too, how the panelled door at the far end of the room reflects the light from beyond, thus lengthening the aerial perspective. But the parts in shadow, they are the real miracle; the high and empty spaces where nothing stands out, and yet everything may be seen, as our eyes become accustomed to the gloom; where the air is unobtrusive, as always in a shadowy place, yet permeating, circulating. "We feel," writes John Hay in "Castilian Days," "like walking to the side of the painter to see how his portrait is coming on." The illusion is startling, an illusion somehow of aspects and effects, almost *subconsciously familiar.* The more we look, the more we forget art and stand in the midst of life. That is art's triumph — to make us acknowledge that out of the dead past a moment has been made to live again. No romantic dream, though ever so mellifluous, could charm us with so sure a charm, the charm of a severely plain and darkened room as it appeared once just for a moment, with just a moment's accident of transitory light, of unpremeditated action and arrangement, and of natural

colour. How could the romance of reality be better demonstrated for all to see, than by this record of a casual observation, converted into a thing of transcendant beauty by the sheer æsthetic impressionability of a single human vision.

Of the master's brush-work it is easy to become ecstatic and lose one's sense of art's relative values. His dexterity was amazing, and his mastery of his materials greater than that of any painter before or since. Hals was also a magician of the brush, but he was a specialist, like our one-sided painters of to-day. Such versatility as Velasquez reveals at the Prado must make us all very humble. Beginning with a hard realism which aimed at nothing more than the imitation of objects and the character of a face, or a figure, he learned quickly how to eliminate and simplify for the sake of a single effect. Each head in "Los Borrachos" is such a masterpiece of characterization that our attention passes from part to part and fails to remember the picture as a whole. Velasquez learned in time that an impressionistic portrait group is an impossibility. Here we get an impression, it is true, an impression of the dazed way these besotted peasants are staring at us, from eyes all stark with drink. But that was not the essential impression. We have lost the picture in appreciation of the parts. Then the painter undertook his first visit to Italy, and the decorative pictures and equestrian portraits with landscape backgrounds are the result. Dur-

ing this period, Velasquez, became a spirited sketcher of atmospheric effects. The equestrian portrait of Balthasar Carlos is almost lyrical; so rhythmic and fresh is it in colour and spirit, so true to the mood of winsome boyhood, and the physical joy of a gallop when, on a spring morning, the wind is racing from the hills. The colours sparkle. The silver of the cloud shine and of the light on the snowy summits enlivens the melody made by the brisk hoofs of the comical barrel-shaped pony, and the pink and gold sash of the little prince as it flies in the breeze. With such adventures in art Velasquez was training his eye for the slashing and rippling, flowing and flowering brush stroke of his later days. And he was also anticipating the decorative harmonies of colour with which he interpreted the charm of children. The "Infanta" of the Louvre is a simple chord of coral pink, black and pearl. At Vienna we enjoy the same little girl dressed in salmon pink and standing against a curtain of robin's egg blue. The "Maria Theresa" of the Prado is a brilliant improvisation in tints of strawberry and silver. The sparkle of the braid and the filmy transparency of the lace handkerchief reveal an unerring lightness and a debonair certainty of touch.

But the most wonderful portrait from the standpoint of the virtuoso is the "Pope Innocent" of the Doria Palace, Rome. The sheen of the cape is brushed in swirls of purple and pink that only a genius would have dared to reveal as the

hollows and high-lights of crimson silk. Tintoret and Greco influenced this cape, and Titian may be detected in the wonderful grainy white which, in a large way, imitates the fringes of heavy lace of the prelate's skirt. But only Velasquez could have modelled the face, modelled it in full, uncompromising light, thus capturing that furtive look of sinister calculation; the expression of a hard man hoarding dark thoughts. "Bob" Stevenson, in his invaluable commentary upon Velasquez, said that the only key to the secret of the master's modelling was "the brushing of the obvious direction of the forms so as to supplement tone and structure by the sentiment of the execution." I am particularly pleased by this phrase "the sentiment of the execution." Elaborating the thought, he insists that Velasquez never used style for its own sake. "His composition was never a pattern forced upon Nature. His drawing was not an effort to realize abstract contours. His colour was not the harmony of positive tints understood by a milliner. His brush was constantly changing with his impressions, as the tones of a man's voice vary with his emotions. Thus in 'Philip IV Old' no brushwork is visible as befits an illusion of flesh closely seen in strong light. His modelling not only changes character with the amount of light, but with the size of the canvas, the width or narrowness of the field of view, and the position near or far from the focus of impression."

"Las Hilanderas" is an example of the perfection of human sight and reproductive skill. We stand among the spinners in the dark work room of the Royal Manufactory of Tapestries. As in "Las Meninas," the upper air is steeped in gloom. But here the eye is attracted by a view into the show-room where on the wall the dazzling daylight pours upon tapestries of rose, blue and silver, and upon the figures of fashionable ladies standing there. From this luminous background a single ray of light falls upon the exquisitely rounded neck and shoulders of a young girl in the centre of the workers. The shadows are deep enough to dim the faces and figures of the other women, but we can see (and almost hear) the whirring revolutions of the spinning wheel. The contrast then is of light and dark air, of colour and gloom, riches and poverty, luxury and toil, but all this felt rather than seen, in the dull way we *feel* things when, in real life, we are preoccupied by the moment's purely visual impression. The modern impressionism which aims at transitory effects of light and air has achieved no picture comparable to this, nor have I found a more interesting impression of the really significant facts of life, in any picture of the type which depends upon interest of subject for success. Those who would find the complete Velasquez, the accurate and yet profoundly thoughtful observer of appearances, and the marvellous virtuoso of the brush, can find him in this picture. It

may be less pleasing than "Las Lanzas" and less perfect than "Las Meninas," but it is, I repeat, the complete Velasquez, and therefore, needless to say, one of the two or three most important pictures in the world.

Of his more personal moods, the beggars, dwarfs, and buffoons are perhaps the best expression. They speak his mind about the beauty of the homeliest truths, if eyes know how to see. Free from Court dictation, the artist was free to use the utmost freedom in his satirical conceptions and technical experiments. The old fellow named Aesop is painted with a gusto and a bravura which surpasses Hals, and without his slashing. The face is that of a street-corner philosopher, resigned to life, and soon to be done with it, inclined to be tolerant with adversity, and tolerant too with his own rather worthless self, yet crackling like a tongue of fire among dead leaves with a dry, crisp humour. "Moenippus" too is an odd "character" treated with playful satire and inspired fancifulness of execution. In fact he seems to me the inspiration of everything Whistler ever did in portraiture. Velasquez was here insisting that bright colours are not essential to decoration. Take an old quaint beggar, with the wild, jolly look of a man who talks with wit unbecoming his years, such a fellow will do if you place him on narrow, upright canvas that sets off his gaunt figure. The black cloak will not be too sombre nor the brown slouch hat too dull for

this decorative panel. Tilt the head back a little, just to catch the pale light, which will mellow the dusty black of the cloak and brown of the hat as it skims the enveloping darkness, and reveals the depths of air around and beyond. By a perfect handling of "values," and a magic of smudgy touch, Velasquez has left the empty spaces full of air and the homely textures eloquent of form.

Already, I have said more than enough about the "Enchanter of Realism," for Stevenson's book is the last word on the subject. However, I would advise you to forget everything you have read, and to take the first opportunity to discover Velasquez for yourself. You will never forget the experience. The Süd Express carries you in comfort from Paris to Madrid in twenty-two hours.

MOENIPPUS
By Velasquez

IV

REVOLUTIONS AND REACTIONS IN PAINTING

ATTEMPTING to define what painting ought to be, that profound critic Thomas Coleridge arrived at the true meaning of Impressionism in the pictorial arts. "Painting" he said, "is the middle quality between a thought and a thing, the union of that which is Nature with that which is exclusively human." Now among the great Impressionists this middle quality has been established and maintained. In the best pictures by Velasquez the balance was absolutely perfect. If to-day he is considered the greatest painter of all times it is because, in making us see the truth of just what he saw, he also made us feel the beauty of just what he felt. Thus we learned from him both the beauty of truth, so variously appealing to us all, and the truth of beauty, as revealed to his individual consciousness. The great landscape painters were equally true to this æsthetic impressionism. It was Constable who first applied to the study of earth and sky the great principle Velasquez had formulated, namely, the difference between fact and appearance, between actuality and the truth of visual sensation.

Yet although this great pathfinder was the first to do justice to the good, familiar world out-of-doors, the first to discard the drop-curtain which had so long passed for landscape, yet his daring brush did not, in its pride, obtrude its new devices. The balance was maintained. Once again, with Corot, it was the soul of the great poet combined with the enlightened skill of the observant naturalist which cast both the illusion of reality and the spell of fairyland over the commonplace suburbs of Paris. It seems then that Coleridge was absolutely right when he said "Painting is the middle quality between a thought and a thing."

In approaching the exhibitions of these latter days we discover at once how technique has come to vaunt itself, to overwhelm both subject and sentiment. The means of expression are of more concern than the thing to be expressed and all too often, in spite of many pretensions to the contrary, painters express nothing but the newness of their paint or the newness of their particular cult. As I write, the air of studios in New York is charged with much talk about painting, talk which is full of fanaticism and mystification and real concern for the future of art, all agitated by a recent exposure of crass sensationalism in pictures — an International Exhibition of Modern Art quite stupefying in its vulgarity. With this experience fresh in memory the first thought that occurs to me about contemporary painting is

that it is lawless, the second, following fast upon the first, is that its lawlessness has in many cases made the painter a slave to his own mad whims and bad habits. Instead of trying to become like the Old Masters — he tries to be what nobody ever wanted to be before him. Superficially such a philosophy has a gallant air. Gauguin's much quoted classification of painters as either plagiarists or revolutionists was like a call to battle. The motley horde of studio-adventurers heard the call. To-day they are riotously proclaiming that everything shall be upside down, that in the new art no woman need have a mouth. Instead she may have four eyes all on the same side of her face. It is not true. But who shall say what is truth? A woman with no mouth and four eyes will give a man a new and strange emotion. That emotion is art. Scratches of pale pink and blobs of blood-red may not suit an anæmic taste, but can we be sure that it is not a very exquisite colour scheme for interior decoration. Who shall say what is beauty? Pale pink and blood-red will give a man a new and strange emotion. That emotion is art. So runs the philosophy of Matisse and his followers.

But of course such extremists are anarchists not artists. As Kenyon Cox puts it, they no more deserve consideration as technicians than the bad boys whose nasty smudges in coloured chalks they unconsciously imitate. When I say that in these

latter days technique has come to vaunt itself — to overwhelm subject and sentiment, I do not refer to the representatives of degeneracy in painting. I am thinking rather of the most brilliant artists of our period — men who are making the most vivid history of our own time. Some of them are Romanticists, others Realists — but an influence common to both their camps keeps their advance in a similar direction. This influence is the scientific spirit of the age. Nature is now reverenced, not so much for its spiritual appeal nor as a wonderful background for the human drama but for its evanescent effects, its fascinating problems. The essential characteristic of the prevailing impressionism is the delight in the display of skill. Of course there are less adventurous spirits content to tell tales to the sentimental public in much the old Victorian fashion or to follow the Barbizon tradition in landscape with unassuming reverence. But the bigger men have been ever abreast of the times, striving to render sensation, eager to shock the eye into recognition of an unsuspected beauty, to hold the mind with a thrill of new interest or to lead it down a moonlit lane of fanciful suggestion. When from the proper perspective the annals of the period are written, the names of an amazing host of talented painters will have to be reckoned with. There have been romancers and symbolists, decorators of surfaces great and small, clever and concise analysts of outdoor and indoor

light, of men and women of all classes and types, of woods and fields in every season, of city streets and rock-bound coasts. Art has been independent and irrepressible. Painters have worked side by side along widely divergent lines and each man true to his own philosophy. In this way our children's children shall know us, the many-sidedness of our lives, the complex diversities of our interests, as perhaps no other age has ever been known before. Yet through all this varied achievement a single spirit has been all pervasive, a spirit of joy in painting for painting's sake, in the successful performance of tricks, in the overcoming of self-imposed difficulties, in the production of subtle and novel effects, in all the excitements of virtuosity. Painters are in danger now-a-days of forgetting that the best art is "the middle quality between a thought and a thing." Such mystical dreamers as Matthew Maris have left us nothing but the thought, all too subtly suggested for the sake of a special sort of beauty. Such unemotional observers as Claude Monet have left us nothing but the thing, all too plainly presented for the sake of a special sort of truth. But the union — the union of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human, this *essential compromise*, modern art seems for the most part too self-conscious, too self-sufficient, to ever quite attain.

Objectivity is the main characteristic of the contemporary naturalists, and this is true of the

portrait painters, the painters of genre, and of landscape. John S. Sargent is certainly one of the great artists of all time. He has been likened to Velasquez and the influence of that master is indeed apparent. There is, however, in Sargent, as in so many of his contemporaries, the display of "bravura" in sheer pride of performance which one never notices in the more serious art of the great Spaniard. There is more real affinity to Hals, whose impulsive modelling by the brush is at once remembered, also that swift, unhesitating capture of the first flash of impression. Sargent, it is true, blurts out his likes and dislikes, showing for example, the dismal pride that clings to the fag ends of ancient families or ushering in with mock dignity the aristocracy of sudden wealth. When his subjects interest him as did Coventry Patmore and dear little Beatrice Goelet he makes them deeply appealing. When, however, they bore or irritate him he attends to it that all who see his pictures shall share his uncomplimentary impressions. Yet he never paints what he does not actually see. If there is a mask of false pretences between him and his sitter, he will not attempt to penetrate it, choosing rather to paint it in with particular care.

This objectivity of vision is even more a characteristic of our American landscape painters, many of whom delight in the depiction of the most uninteresting scenery. E. W. Redfield paints little else than the slushy roads, the flat

and barren fields, the squat, crude houses, within a short distance of the Delaware River. Yet his wintry weather is so marvellously true that we seem to breathe frosty, tingling air, and hear the crunch of crusted snow under our boots. In the Metropolitan Museum there is an important example of the work of George Bellows, a young man of great talent all too often misapplied. The picture is called "Up the Hudson" but a better title would have been "March Winds." The air seems vibrant with a passionate gust, the kind that stings and roars in passing. Yet there is no over-accentuation, no bending tree-tops, no blown skirts. From behind a cloud the sun has re-appeared, although part of the river and the farther shore are still in shadow. The foreground stands out almost depressingly clear in the thin air and hard, cold light. A sleek black locomotive has just burst into sight from around a curve, and steaming briskly in the opposite direction a merry little tug works its willing way up stream, while the white caps sparkle and the wind roars. At just such a place, in just such weather, we have experienced just such an emotion. Or is it only a sensation? There is a wholly unexpected beauty in such plain speaking. The illusion stares us rudely in the face until it becomes almost disquieting — yet the very candour of the language is in its favour. We end by approving of it for its "confounded cleverness."

This wholesome objectivity, derived from

Courbet, has been subjected to innumerable experiments and adventures. Manet was among the first in this field. From portraiture of a distinguished quality reminiscent of Hals and Goya, he turned in later years to the study of light and the new, high-keyed palette, and soon became absorbed in such problems as sunlight filtered through foliage upon white dresses and black hats, or the artificial illumination of ball-rooms and theatres. To him and to Degas, who with classic grace, Japanese waywardness, and Gallic irony, celebrated the ballet girl, we are indebted for more than the mere outward semblance of Paris, rather the spectacle of modern life as seen through the modern temperament. Besnard has kept bright the traditions of Manet and Degas. He will paint you the darkness of an amphitheatre contrasted with the glare on the stage. Then again he will display the curious effect of morning sunlight from an unseen window reflected on one side of a woman's body, while the other side catches the flickering gleam of firelight from an unseen hearth. Such trick pictures have a certain fascination. Of that there can be no doubt. One man I know posts himself on the top of a very tall building which stands on the top of a very tall hill. From this eminence he dares to paint the snow-covered roofs of houses a hundred feet below. Not satisfied with the difficulties of the point of view, he selects that baffling half-hour, just before a winter night sets

in, when the feeble, blinking yellow lights over a city seem to flicker and fade in the gray and stifling gloom. This is objectivity becoming unwholesome since no beauty can come of it unless we concede beauty to all things skilfully handled. When art is made into a science it loses its own identity. As that thorough modernist George Moore acknowledged, "great art sees, dreams, expresses but reasons never, never calculates." Calculation, he declared, was a sure sign of decadence in pictorial creation. Now Claude Monet was himself a great master whose enthusiasm for the truth of aerial vibration was almost lyrical, almost sun-worship. Yet the important system he discovered actuated such extremists as Seurat and Signac to multicoloured stitches guaranteed to make the air vibrate with accuracy. I really believe that it was a reaction from this excessive objectivity that induced such unbalanced fanatics as Cezanne and Van Gogh to imagine that they saw nature subjectively in cubes and ovals, and the half savage Gauguin to return altogether to savagery in order to free his ego from the complications and calculations of science. The incoherent designs of the Cubists and the Futurists followed these men in logical succession.

The creative mind is apt to be always in a ferment of revolt against whatever mental fashion or convention happens to be prevailing. Revolutions in the style of painting are the natural

consequence of the perfectly normal desire of painters to attract attention to their hitherto neglected talents. When a painter realizes that he cannot hope to compete with the past, he falls back upon the consoling thought that at least he may anticipate the future. There have always been Futurists because there have always been failures; also, let me hasten to add, because change is necessary to life — art stagnating when invention stands still. Yet change does not necessarily mean progress, and the art of the future is not necessarily an advance upon the art of the past. The history of art is a history of reactions. A reaction from either genuinely primitive or pseudo-primitive crudity will tend to bring us back to culture, its complexities and refinements. A Renaissance is apt to degenerate into an eclectic period impotent to invent on its own account. Consequently new initiative is needed and the Futurists promptly appear. But with each revolt against outworn convention a new convention is sure to be established — and so school succeeds school and the cycles of reaction go round. Time winnows the wheat from the chaff, for individuals are greater than schools and their systems and revolutions. Time saves for us the Gothic craftsmen who, like children, emerged so long ago from their cloistered retreat into a new and busy world; in whose pictures naturally subject was supreme. Time saves for us the great men of the great epochs that came

after, when once appreciation had grown out of perception; men who, with leisure, learned how to select beauty and to dream dreams and to evoke romance, and who painted for the glory of God, and the joy of life and even for the joy of the painting. But Time relentlessly discards the men of the decadence of stagnation who obey laws without thinking and imitate what has gone before — weak from overmuch knowledge and humility. And it rejects with scorn the claims to consideration of those charlatans who imitate, not the best but the *worst* forms and colours that the hand of man can devise. But let us return to our story of revolutions and reactions.

Italy was the fashion until Watteau adapted the Italian idyll to French taste and his own intimate emotion. When the French Revolution had swept aside the prettiness that had degenerated into a convention with Watteau's imitators, the Consulate and the Empire set up instead, for the guidance of artists, the sterner forms of Roman and Greek statues; a formidable revival of classic outlines and imposing subjects from history which left no room for the personal impression. It was in fierce revolt against this depressing scholasticism that Delacroix defied the rule of Ingres and asserted the need of freedom for the imagination. But his paintings were in their turn discovered to be too literary — still too dependent upon subject for inspiration, like the novels of Scott and the poems of Byron. It

was Constable who re-discovered the romance of reality which Vermeer had known, and Constable it was who fathered the great Barbizon masters of France. Then came a blunt, coarse peasant named Courbet, who said in effect, "the romance of reality be damned! Get down to facts." Thus he ushered in the uncompromising Naturalists and their descendants the Optical Illusionists. As I have already observed, Monet was a great master, but light was his obsession, and when once his theory of sunspots had been exaggerated by extremists, his fine, strong art degenerated into a mean little science. From this orgy of objectivity reaction set in, and behold the present orgy of the subjective at the International Exhibition. Between the stitches of Signac and cubes of Picabia there may seem to be a superficial resemblance but there is really a world of difference. When Signac paints the Bay of Naples, the stitches describe the rotary motion of the air as sensed by the optic nerve. When Picabia treats the same subject his cubes do not refer to the atmosphere in relation to any nerve. They express the state of mind into which he is plunged upon observing the Bay of Naples under the stress of heaven only knows what hideous circumstance.

That the Cubists are doing something new cannot be denied, although just what it is that they are doing no one has yet perceived. Seen with sufficient sympathy, might not these visions

symbolize the chaos before creation or the crash at the end of everything? One picture looked to me like the wreck of an aeroplane, another something like a landslide, a third very like a bad dream, perhaps a carpenter's nightmare of ten thousand splintered shingles. But no, the first was entitled "Portrait of a Man," the second "Religious Procession in Seville," the third "A Nude Descending a Staircase." In the newspaper the other day I read Mr. Picabia's explanation of these mysteries. "The objectivity," he says, "of the subjectivity is in every case superinduced by the original sensation." At the exhibition it was interesting to look at the people. Occasionally I detected a sly smile or a suppressed giggle, but for the most part a pitiful struggle was going on to find sense in the nonsense, to discover the connexion between the titles in the catalogue and the frenzied cubes and colours on the walls. One such picture would have relegated its creator to a very private sanatorium. But a hundred and more! Evidently an important movement! Evidently to be taken in all seriousness! And so they stood about agonizing themselves into the frame of mind which in the end made everything quite clear to them, and the complicated emotions of the Cubists their emotions no less. May the Lord temper to them their affliction! And all the while I could well imagine the perpetrators of the little joke watching the result of their labours with satisfaction — winking the other eye, quite

weak from excessive laughter. But to the public — the philosophy of cubes is made to seem ever so serious. We are told that in order to express our modern consciousness we must rid ourselves of every impression, have done with every memory of nature and other pictures, and simply confess frankly and without bashfulness, what it is we *feel* when we neither see nor think of anything in particular. What we feel may be chaos. So much the better. It is the awful chaos before the creation of "the art of the future."

The movement is not new. It is in its last decrepitude. It is not a beginning. It is the end of a reaction against impersonal truth-telling in pictures that reached its limit (for the present) in Courbet, Manet, and Monet, and against subjective æstheticism in pictures that could go no farther (for the present) than the Japanesque "arrangements" of Whistler and the stained glass beatitudes of the pre-Raphaelites. After these men decadence set in. Then it was that Paul Cezanne decided that painters were becoming too unemotional and scientific in their conception of truth, and too effeminate or too literary in their conception of beauty. He and Van Gogh determined to lay the foundations for the "art of the future," which was to be an art of personal expression — beginning as in childhood, with the most naïve exclamations of surprise upon beholding the most homely and familiar objects. To this infantile point of view — free from all preju-

dice and preconception — they trained their vision, and the deliberate crudities they created had so unmistakable a quality of elemental frankness that young revolutionists dreamed of returning through this art to the secret of Giotto's simplicity wherefrom to begin all over again. There were artists much bigger than these fanatics who all unconsciously abetted the Futurist affectations and exaggerations. I have in mind Rodin's return to Gothic directness of emotion, Monticelli's return to unrepresentative ornament, Puvis de Chavanne's return to Greek rhythm and Primitive innocence, as seen through yearning, modern eyes, finally Renoir, who though associated with the Luminarists, was far from being an impersonal observer but one who saw the Parisian world, haut-monde and demi-monde in a shimmer of vivid colours symbolical of his gaily emotional temperament. All these men were great in their own work, but injurious to little men inclined to be lawless and desirous of notoriety. The present decadence then set in with Cezanne and Van Gogh and Gauguin, with Moreau, and Conder and Beardsley. Drawing was to be as free as the thought that guides it, and emotion free from all restraint of knowledge. The fallacy of such expression was obvious. This was no return to nature. Instead of devotion to the great masters of the past, to the Greek standard of form, the Venetian standard of colour, the Velasquez standard of values, the Dutch

standard of surface quality, these men harked back instead to Primitive models, to Gothic gargoyles and monastic missals, to Egyptian carvings and Indian carpets, to Persian miniatures and Chinese embroideries, even to Polynesian textiles. Finally with Matisse the degeneration of this so-called "expressionism" reached its bottom. Certainly this person creates patterns unworthy of the mere ignorance of little children and benighted savages, patterns not only crude but deliberately false and at times insanely depraved.

But we need not tremble for the future of art in America because of the International Exhibition of Modern Art and the widespread excitement it has created. All shall be for the best. By contrast with the aberrations of these extremists from abroad, what now seems too radical in the work of many vital and genuinely progressive painters will appear safe and sane. As for our more timid painters, the men hitherto inclined to self-restraint and strict adherence to popular demand, they will now be spurred to more independence and abandonment of mood by the knowledge that even monstrous things can be perpetrated upon the good-nature of unthinking people, who are now apparently eager to appreciate the various aspirations of art, and are simply in dire need of being instructed to distinguish between the false and the true. Reaction to a period of sensitive æstheticism and sound intel-

lectuality seems inevitable. There will be, unless I am much mistaken, a return, if not to Classic formula, at least to a classic respect for form and to classic standards of beauty that are never outworn, though forever changing with the changes in our lives, and the inevitable reactions. Of course, we shall not lose the value of what we have so recently gained, the recognition of beauty in modern life, even its momentary appearances, a palette true to the lights and darks of the all-pervading atmosphere, the mastery of simplification and synthesis, the personal way of seeing and recording vison that constitutes what we mean by the word "style." Subjects will soon be once again of real importance to pictures, although they will have to be subtly suggestive rather than tediously descriptive as in the olden days. For instance, we need no longer go to the Orient to be Orientalists. With sufficient insight and imagination we can find Oriental suggestions in chance observations of life close at hand. The landscapes of Augustus John painted in Provence and even in Wales have that disturbing brilliancy of opposed tones of deep blues and pale greens and crushed-strawberry pinks — which suggest the backgrounds of Persian miniatures. Several American painters have recently evoked for me — not the memory of Eastern art but the Eastern colour-dream in the abstract. And they have, almost accidentally, happened upon this fragrant charm of suggestion in the midst of the

most matter-of-fact observations of things as they are. Jerome Myers discovered that a corner of the New York Ghetto could be easily transfigured by sunset-haze into a market city of Arabia. George Woodbury found a swimming hole where the water is peacock blue and the rocks golden brown, that would easily transport the mind to the haunts of thieves in the Arabian Nights by merely hollowing the rocks into a cave and supplying the necessary touches of scarlet by the caps of girls bathing. At the Spring Academy a prize was awarded to Gifford Beal for a picture entitled "The Elephants are Coming." In all magnificence they emerge into strong sunlight from the shadow of a great tent, and although it is only a circus tent and the gorgeous trappings are much the worse for wear, yet the suggestion is of India and of a great Rajah's encampment. I speak of these pictures, because they illustrate, for the moment's need, the combined qualities of personal impressionism and decorative imagination which I feel sure will characterize the real "art of the future." It is significant that none of these pictures were painted by romanticists or colourists. All these men are realists who just chanced to be imaginative and decorative in spite of themselves.

In the steady upward progress of art in this country to the great Renaissance that is surely coming we need none of this sensationalism, so recently imported from the old world. What we

need is the inspiring self-reliance of our own American masters, George Inness and Winslow Homer — men who dared to be true to Nature and to their own dreams, above and beyond the agitation of the Schools and their little revolutions, consecrated always to those special beauties of the visible world which particularly thrilled their souls. Truth in painting they recognized as the painter's personal conception of nature's character, Beauty as the painter's personal selection of nature's enchantment, Art as the finished product, created from Nature's raw materials, to the end that a richer life might result. For that is the purpose of art; not art for the sake of art, certainly not art for the sake of sensation, but art that will stimulate in us a deeper appreciation of the glorious privilege of living.

V

NATIONALITY IN PICTURES

NATIONS, like individuals, have characters of their own. Just as the character of an individual is moulded by influences that have entered his being before birth or touched his life in passing, so the character of a nation represents the composite mind, temperament and experience of its people. Since it is the acknowledged function of art to express the character of life, it follows that, if not the most successful in execution, at least the most significant in conception, will be that art which represents not the few but the many, and depicts the mental life not of any one class but of a whole nation. Technically the greatest perfection of workmanship has frequently been attained in periods when art was a matter of patrician patronage conveying the patrician viewpoint with all its implied dogma. But in-so-far as there is any truth in the saying that art is the expression of life, the one-sidedness of so specialized and conventionalized an expression as we find in periods when the people's point of view is of no consequence, must detract from its deeper significance. The greatest epochs of artistic expression have actually been those in which

nations were permeated through and through with the sense of beauty and the value of their own minds and moods. True nationality in art is only possible when the people have the opportunity and encouragement to express themselves, free from any mental reservation as to the adequacy or importance of their own point of view. The subjection of an artist, either voluntary or compulsory, to any power, temporal or ecclesiastical, simply means that he is content to submerge his own craving for self-expression in order to supply a demand. Since the integrity of national art depends upon the creative integrity of the individuals that make up a nation, then the artist who follows the tradition of a class or obeys the fashion of a cult is really less national in his aim than the artist who just works for himself and himself alone.

Never before or since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy has there been a nation-wide interest and activity in the making of beautiful things. Never before or since have art and life been closely related. The best pictures were full of subject matter, yet true by instinct to the unity of impression demanded by æsthetic principle. Art was the language of all people, high and low. There was no dream too lofty and abstract, no detail of life too insignificant for depiction. No prince nor pope was too powerful a force in the world of action to disdain the creations of the humblest dreamer, and if the Church

was chiefly the patron of art it was because art was genuinely the passion of the Church. What more vivid record could have been made of the brilliant semi-oriental pageantry of life in fifteenth-century Venice than we behold in the pictorial stories of Carpaccio, or of the quaint mysticism and naïve classicism of Florence at the same period, as embodied in the pictorial fables of Piero di Cosimo. Venice was sea-faring and prosperous. Consequently her art was materialistic and sumptuously decorative. Florence was the seat of mediæval and classical learning. Consequently her art was a blend of these warring intellectual elements. And yet, in spite of these separate nationalities throughout the Peninsula, art was a privilege which belonged everywhere to the people, instructing their minds, inspiring their religion, giving them the opportunity for the exchange of observations and ideas, which books, magazines and newspapers do to-day.

However, in spite of its true democracy of art the Italian Renaissance indirectly exerted a baneful influence which in the end made art anything but democratic. So great had been the achievement, that the less imaginative ages which followed, despaired of improvement and consequently set to work either to copy revered models or to outshine them in grandeur of subject-matter. There was much talk about the Ideal, and the search for it, as if such a thing could ever be found on this earth even in Greece or Italy.

This scholasticism required leisure to travel and the culture consequent upon study, opportunities denied to all save the upper classes. And so after a depressing decadence through the seventeenth century in Italy and France and even England, eighteenth-century art became a flattering servant of royalty, veneered with elegance and love of the "grand manner." Such frippery ruined the talent of all but the very greatest. It must be admitted, however, that men like Guardi, Watteau and, at their best, Reynolds and Romney, were not only great in spite of their allegiance to the all too insistent aristocracy of art, but were really, to a certain extent, great because of it. They seem to have been born for the purpose of expressing the charm of life's romantic comedy in the days of minuets and duels, of silks, satins and perukes promenading on the Venice piazza and Pierrot serenading by the light of the moon, of Mrs. Siddons posing as the Muse of Tragedy and Lady Hamilton as a Priestess of Bacchus. If, as one critic has written, the humble labourer appeared in the eighteenth-century picture, it was "basking in the sunlight among domestic animals in a sweet little ivy-clad cottage, clean and contented, and quite as inanimate as the rural scenery of which he was a painted part." Meanwhile this same labourer was brooding sullenly over his distressful grievances and preparing for the great revolution. Even at its very best, with such men as Guardi, Watteau,

Reynolds and Romney, eighteenth-century art in Europe was bounded by the wealth and culture and rather snobbish mental attitude of the aristocracy. It was life, of course, a true section of it, but only so much of the world as may be seen in formal gardens through the mullioned windows of country houses, only so much as seemed pleasing to the eye of the withdrawn and supersensitive leisure classes.

A truly national art must grow up out of the soil and retain something of its savour. It must be as truly a flowering of a nation's life as a thought or deed is a flowering of an individual's spirit. A national art reflects national character, and if a nation's character is dormant or insincere, or narrowed by class prejudice, its art will surely be dull or artificial or bound by convention. Great artists may be born in epochs when national art is impossible. It may be that these great artists are handicapped in expressing the individuality of their nation by some overwhelming foreign influence prevalent in their day. Rubens succeeded in expressing Italian inspiration with truly Flemish qualities of execution, and Watteau in adapting Italian inspiration and Flemish execution to the exigencies of French taste. But, although the original inspiration had been potent for all sorts and conditions of Italians, when it passed to Flanders it became imbued with the pungency of all things exotic, and so only suited to the palate of the travelled aristocracy,

and when it was served to France it went straight to the Court at Versailles, for who but kings could appreciate flavours so piquant and recherché? But there are always other great painters who reject foreign influences and are sufficiently far-sighted to perceive the æsthetic possibilities of native subjects long before this consciousness has dawned for the majority of their people. Such a man was peasant Breughel in Belgium. Living in a period when the honest aspiring creations of the Gothic centuries were being abandoned, and Italian influences absorbed to the death of nationality in Flemish art, he held out sturdily for the national character and the local inspiration. Progress was necessary. Men had learned to see things in a larger way than the old illuminators. But it was to the Gothic tradition of quaint curiosity and decorative brightness that Breughel returned in attempting to express national life in a national way.

But although we see in the poster art of Breughel a conscious impulse to express national life and character, yet his attitude was still too abstract, too almost apologetic for its interest in local scenery and the familiar occupations of soldiers and peasants. He painted, with evident relish in the novelty of his work, decorative types of home scenery and diverting types of fellow-countrymen. But nationality is only superficially typical. Essentially it is a matter of individual character. This interest in the separate existence

of men and women simply because of their separate manhood and womanhood, this interest in the appearance of town and country, not as background, but for the love of woods and fields, in short, this new æsthetic point of view was the product of a Northern civilization and of a secular and democratic conception of art which did not attain greatness until the Holland of the seventeenth century. The Southern Renaissance, for all its encouragement of art among the people, had been absolutely a matter of patrician patronage. Hence the inevitable conventionalization of pictures — the glorification of Church and State. But the time came when Church and State ceased to dictate to art. In the first place the Dutch government was a popular one. Successful war had made it so. In the second place there was national union; no warring factions and tributary states as in Italy, each with a national character of its own. It is significant that the Dutch painters did not depict scenes of war, but of the peace which followed victory. The Dutch genius for knowing its own capacities was at once revealed — the instinct which has made Dutch art up to the present day a triumph of sweet reasonableness. The reformed church no longer needed decoration. Therefore the decorative impulse was directed to the home. Art was under no obligation to princes and to priests. Therefore it was independent — a means of self-expression for the people. Prosperous and full of assurance, the

swaggering Dutchmen relaxed themselves after their adventures, took their ease in their inns with the merriest companions, and delighted to return to their pleasant houses and comfortable wives and boisterous children. It was a good world in which they lived, and as they neither knew nor cared to bother about any other, it was their own good world they wished to see reflected in pictures.

Every self-respecting Hollander had his portrait painted and groups were quite the thing for Directors' Meetings and Hunting Clubs. People went to Frans Hals and Jan der Helst much as we now go to the photographer. Jan Steen and Van Ostade painted tavern life and the family gatherings of the lower classes. Adrian van de Velde observed street corners, market places and farmyards with a new knowledge of outdoor light and changing weather. Van Goyen sensitively transcribed Holland's moisture-laden atmosphere, and Cuyp was in his happiest mood when the humid air was made to shimmer with the suffusion of sunlit mist after an evening shower. De Hooghe was at his best with little vistas of cheerful rooms, sunlight streaming in across the checkered tiles through open doors and windows. Vermeer's daylight was cooler and more evenly diffused, enveloping objects in a silvery lustre. Even more modern than his interiors is the glorious "View of Delft" at the Hague — the direct inspiration of the great Jacob Maris, and certainly

one of the two or three supreme pictures of the world. Metsu and Terborch were less interested in daylight than in the material surroundings of patrician families. They have never been excelled in the painting of velvet, satin, lace and crêpe, of armour, pewter, glass and Oriental rugs. In striking contrast the great Rembrandt saw life not objectively but with intense personal feeling. In him the aspiring quality of North Gothic romanticism transcended the blunt, uncompromising realism of his own race. Then there was Ruysdael with his melancholy — a mood of personal sorrow intensified by Holland's almost oppressive immensities of storm-swept sky. In revealing their own passionate souls these two great poet-painters revealed also their nation's capacity for passion. But they were not as characteristic of their race as the more objective painters. Calm observation and sane, straightforward comment upon the neighbours at their day's work, such was the aim and such the real significance of the Dutch character in art.

II

Yet the real significance of a nation's character can often be divined from what has been left unsaid about national life, for this inner truth is really an invisible spirit, a hidden light refracted through many an outward semblance. Thus a seemingly superficial mannerism of pictorial method, either in decoration or representation, may be a

salient clue to national character, and may give us that generalized conception which is all we can expect to receive from an alien race. Travellers in distant lands are always searching for the "Local Colour" of the places they visit, poking for and peeping into such intimacies of scenery and costume as may contribute to a more or less decorative general impression that will seem to them typical as the windows of their minds are opened back across the years. Nor should this local colour be despised. To comprehend this elusive charm which so baffles his analysis, to recognize and, by means of his art, substantiate this peculiar quality in his native land which the artist feels to be significant and is willing to present to foreigners as characteristic, perhaps symbolical, this is one of the most important opportunities of the maker of pictures. Yet at this point doubt confronts us. Is the native, after all, the man to record the charm that lies about him, a charm to which, let us hope, he unconsciously contributes? Is not the charm largely a matter of exotic strangeness? Is not the appeal of a foreign land, an alien people, chiefly a sensuous rather than a mental conception? To a certain extent, yes. There are countless artist-eyes in every nation blind to the familiar beauties of home, eyes straining to see what to them must remain quite romantically unreal. To such eyes the romance of reality is incomprehensible. Their nation's charm is infinitely better expressed by

the sympathetic and enthusiastic foreigner and his sketch-book of local colour and his note-book of impressions. And yet sympathy and enthusiasm cannot replace that inevitable self-expression which consciously or unconsciously reveals just where it prides itself upon concealing the racial secret. We have all seen water colours of Japan by clever Western painters. Much of the delicate grace of native art has passed into these pictures. But set their cleverness by the side of art that is truly Oriental, let us say colour prints by Harunobu, and see how quickly they revert to their own type. No, by all means let the æsthetic note of Japan be sounded by the Japanese, and of America by the Americans, and every nation that has or hopes to have a national art, let it speak for itself. Let it speak out with pride of race and a normal sensitiveness to inherited traditions and surrounding influences. Let it speak out with aggressive sincerity and unself-conscious independence. Let it give form to its familiar life or at least illustrate its own æsthetic taste, in either case regardless of what other nations are doing or other ages have done.

We all know that Japanese art is, in a material sense, decorative, but we make altogether too little of the fact that it is also decorative in spirit. In other words, it is imaginative, suggestively dressing up the truth in costume of local colour that is often fantastic and generally tasteful. The old masters who followed Chinese

tradition painted dream visions, portraits and landscapes of the indwelling mind. In modern times, with the opening of her ports to Western influences, Dutch merchants brought to Japan their first conception of an art representative, not only of real life, but of concrete, individualized portraits and landscapes. It was unquestionably this revelation from the West that actuated the growth of the popular school, known as the Ukioye or "Mirror of the Passing World." The name is in itself significant. The Japanese have ever been sensitive to the fugitive nature of life's appearances. For centuries they painted thoughts about the passage of clouds or the flight of birds across the moon. Now they decided to paint not thoughts but things, and to record the transitory beauties of their own life and their own surroundings. It was an art of the people. We are told that the colour prints now esteemed so highly were sold for a few yen and pasted on kitchen screens, as our newspaper supplements are to-day. Consequently these prints were despised by the aristocrats who clung to their long-lost Sung and Kano inspiration. Consequently this plebeian art is as one-sided in its way as the art of the palaces. To comprehend the entire national character it is necessary to regard these separate schools as the broken segments of one æsthetic consciousness. Together they express the national character. Instead of the Dutch individuality in characterization, we find in the colour

prints a satisfaction with generalized types, as in Breughel, and also his general decorative synthesis, his pictorial formula conveying a sense of local colour and of national character. For us of the Western world the charm of the colour prints is partly a sensuous influence of absolutely arbitrary colour and design, partly a stimulant to our curiosity for exotic knowledge and to our decorative imagination. Western travellers in Japan invariably want to carry away with them a more composite expression of Japanese taste and character than the mere facts of photography convey. Now the prints are a commentary on the life and customs of the Japanese people, just at the period of their nation's awakening to Western civilization. It is particularly fortunate that as works of art they are of such vivid attractiveness, for they sum up not only the truth at the depths but the charm on the surface of all things Japanese.

Professor Fenollosa used to say, in a rather fanciful but very fascinating vein of reflection, that it is to Japan we must look for the universal art of the future, the art which will perfectly combine all that is best in the æsthetic self-expression of Orient and Occident. It is quite true that, set uniquely on the path of traffic between East and West, Japan is further endowed with just the receptive and constructive genius necessary for becoming the interpreter of East to West and of West to East. It is just such universal

scholarship as belonged to Fenollosa and Lafcadio Hearn that could bring about so rare an amalgamation. Although personally I am inclined to think with Kipling that:

> East is East and West is West
> And never the twain shall meet,

yet I must acknowledge that the exchange of influences from the opposite ends of the world has been, and will probably continue to be, very great. The School of Ukioye in Japan, originated by Dutch influence, was instrumental in producing a new epoch of art, not only in the Far East but also in Europe and America. To its influence we owe the modern arts of decorative illustration and inexpensive decoration for the people, which have so profoundly affected national life in the arts and crafts devoted to domestic architecture. Scarcely a single painter of distinction among us has failed to absorb consciously or unconsciously some element of Oriental æstheticism. Already such men as Kiyonaga, Harunobu, Hokusai and Hiroshige have attained positions of international influence. These men anticipated the art of modern Europe and America and really founded the modern school of realistic painting represented by the work of Manet, Monet, Renoir and Degas. The acknowledged purpose of these adventurous Frenchmen was to mirror the passing world, precisely as that had been the aim of the vagabond print-and-picture-book painters of

the previous century in Japan. In each case the people were intensely alive and eager for some new phase of self-expression. Art then as the "sensitive barometer of the buoyancy of a nation's spirit" responded with the formation of an intensely individual and, therefore, national mode of expression. Three main ideas Japanese colour prints may be said to have taught Western Europe: (1) the passing show: how to represent the actual everyday world and its ephemeral interests of passing light and life in various ways, concise, capricious, and suggestive; (2) the decorative imagination: how to make these records of passing impressions decorative, as well as representative of the nation's daily life; in other words, how to find the inner spirit, the peculiar distinction of national types and national scenery and to present these things according to national taste; (3) the decorative technique: how to make effective patterns with the simplest means, emphasizing the numberless joys of colour schemes and arabesques, the expressive possibilities of line and mass, and the value of surprises in picturesque invention. These ideas offered so refreshing a contrast to the rules of the academies that the modern European progressives seized upon them with avidity and from them developed their own sense of movement, of irregular space composition, of pure colours juxtaposed for freshness of open-air effect and of decorative arrangements and designs. Without Japanese prints there

might never have been the most delightful phase of the art of Whistler, the modern German poster painters, and the school of French draughtsmen from Degas to Forain.

In Japanese prints are depicted the various occupations of the people at work and play, the multicoloured life of the streets of Yedo, the Geisha dance, the tragic actors, the cherry-blossom picnics by the side of the Sumida River, the tea houses that rest the wanderer on his every pilgrimage (over the Tokaido highway) through the heart of old Japan; across rice fields, over round bridges, down groves of swaying bamboo or avenues of twisted pine. Harunobu was preëminently the colourist. His harmonies of apricot and green, and of ashy rose and steel blue, idealized his observations of middle-class life. Hokusai was also a great man for colour, perhaps his best arrangements being dark blue, coral and apple green, and greenish blue and straw yellow. But he was even greater in his humorous representations of a very vivid life. With equal gusto he would sketch a busy day in a lumber yard, or four graceful girls leaning over a balcony enjoying the beauty of their sacred mountain Fujiyama. Kiyonaga's women were even more knowingly portrayed, with lines not only decorative, but suggestive of life and character. In one print three girls are peering through the barred window of an upper room, that is very dimly illumined, down upon a moonlit harbor and the

red lights flickering on distant ships. But it is Hiroshige who most influenced modern Europe with his valuable ideas for a decorative type of realistic painting. He loved to sketch from great heights and at far distances, and he succeeded admirably in his aërial perspective. He dared to attempt suggesting all sorts of weather, — for instance, the downpours of summer rain, the fairyland of winter snowflakes, the stiff wind that bends the tree-tops and baffles the progress of pedestrians, the tranquil afterglow on the horizon, the witchery of moonlight, even the glow of paper lanterns, with cast shadows. In one of my favorite prints water-buffalo are depicted hauling bales of rice through a mountain village in the twilight. The colour scheme is a delicious one, warm blue and chocolate. I hope I have sufficiently indicated that although the subjects of the prints were taken from life, yet the primary object was ever held to be decoration, and the colours were generally fantastic. No Oriental decorator ever hesitated at blue trees and red mountains, nor even at purple cows. However naturalistic the scenes depicted by such men as Hiroshige, their wholly arbitrary selections and arrangements of colour and line reveal their appreciation of the truth that pictorial art is, after all, only a decorative convention.

At the Paris Exposition of 1875 Japanese art made a profound sensation. Everything Japanese was declared fascinating and Western paint-

ers promptly attempted to transmit the exotic charms into their own work. Many of them succeeded admirably in acquiring the piquant, pictorial mannerisms of Toyokuni and Hiroshige, but, though ever so charming, their "Japane-series" need not be taken too seriously. As I have said, Japan was directly responsible for the modern art of decorative illustration. Incidentally it taught modern Europe many lessons in art, especially the importance of suggestive singleness of impressional effect. It is, however, to artists who never imitated Japanese methods that I turn for the best illustration of their beneficent guidance, to the men who, without concessions to any foreign influence far or near, sought to mirror the passing world even as Hokusai had done in old Japan. And so I speak not of Degas nor of Whistler, but of Renoir, who, better even than Manet and Monet, translated the very spirit of Ukioye into nineteenth-century Parisian. As Camille Mauclaire expressed it — "The race speaks through Renoir." He was the most French of all painters — French in his epicurean sensuousness and in his quaint, whole-hearted, unhesitating abandon. From the voluptuousness of Boucher's flesh-tones and the fantastic playfulness of Watteau's subjects, though regardless of their melancholy, even from Chardin's delight in the colour and texture of homely and familiar objects, and from the distinction, the *style* that ennobled the work of all these masters,

Renoir inherited the racial taste and talent for expressing his own pleasant sense of life's vivacity. At the Luxembourg we cannot fail to linger as fascinated spectators of the open-air dance Renoir saw and recorded on the heights of Montmartre. These men and girls are making the most of their holiday, frolicking like children in the sunlight. For, however vulgar a crowd they may really have been, it was as happy children that Renoir chose to represent them, the hot light filtering through the leaves, checkering the ground with blue shadows and all the air seeming to vibrate to the eye surcharged with heat and dust and the whirling rhythms of the dancing. There is a lot going on, to be sure, but the painter attempts no story-telling, determined only to impress us with his own vivid impression of the moment depicted, that one moment's impression of life's dizzy joyousness. We neither see these people with any clearness nor do we judge them with any seriousness. The mood is only one of colour, of emerald greens and strong enamelled blues and coral pinks blurred by a sense of heat and movement. Well, that is a very personal summer mood of the Parisians. The race indeed speaks through Renoir in such pictures.

But to become really familiar with the man one must go to the Durand-Ruel private collection in the rue de Rome. There we partake of his infectious good humour, his exhilarating vitality, his gaily coloured outbursts of rapture over

modern life, his delight in pretty girls on view at the opera or loafing on a sunlit terrace, his affection for two children at their piano lessons, the pleasure he takes in the company of some men and women lunching up the river on a hot holiday, the fitful breeze flapping the awnings and the general discussion becoming of more importance than the dessert. Anything, everything, gave Renoir inspiration for the production of rich, shimmering colours. The more difficult the subjects he attempted, the more insolently easy the way he mastered them. Sharing Monet's interest in such things as sunlight and refraction, he was almost as romantic as Monticelli. In later years he painted landscapes and flowers just for the sake of the arbitrary colour chords he could make out of them. His is the luxurious spirit of romantic comedy, and back of all its former classic and its recent scientific detachment of vision, such is also the real artistic spirit of the French Nation.

III

But no national art can be summed up in the work of any one man, and Renoir's pictures of the passing show no more justly and comprehensively represent France than Japan is represented by the Ukioye of Hokusai. Every national art is a composite of the art of its most sincere and racially typical artists, the men who see and feel as see and feel the majority of their

compatriots. In Oriental, European, even in British art, there is a certain outstanding quality that enables us to recognize the æsthetic taste and talent of the various nations. It would be a fascinating study to consider at length the relation of a country's social, intellectual and commercial life to the character of its artistic expression. One could reason out, for example, just how from their predominant literature the British have come to desire household sentiments and literary allusions and poetic symbolism in their pictures, and how from familiarity with their own climate they have developed their fine feeling for cloud effects in landscape; how the Spaniards have been true, with a few distinguished exceptions, to their cruel ecclesiastical traditions of sombre tones and sinister subjects with sensational features; how the French are always "vif" and bold, at their worst *reckless*, at their best quick to respond to a subtlety of sensation or emotion, full up and bubbling over with *taste* and temperament; how, to name but one more nation, the Germans are forever Germans, coarse, fantastic, self-reliant, most successful with posters that arrest the eye with broad masses of startling but effective colour, fond of romantic suggestions of native life and legend, with old castles and mediæval housetops and dark forests infested by weird animals.

It is also easy to recognize modern Scandinavian, Belgian and Dutch paintings. Every nation

seems to cling to its national pictorial heritage. But how is it with America? On all sides we hear that America is polyglot, that no national art is possible in a country that never had any real infancy, in a civilization transplanted full grown from foreign lands, in a community peopled by all races and persistently alien. Much of all this is true, just as it is also true that whatever we have had to learn over again about art, after we cut ourselves adrift from Mother England, we learned from the Italians, the Germans, the Dutch, the French and the Spanish. But something also we have gained from our own observations and experiences, and that something has been national character, a national way of seeing and feeling and thinking. What we have learned from abroad has been merely technical. What we have developed for ourselves has been inspirational. In the short space of little more than two generations we have produced a pictorial art endowed with a brighter promise for the future than the art of any other nation in the world at the present time.

American art *did* have its period of infancy. It is very true that the culture of the ages might earlier have been acquired for the asking. But with a new continent of quite overpowering immensity to develop, and a freshly won independence from the old world, and a great ocean between, it is little wonder that our early American artists shared the general opinion that culture

was of less importance than commerce and the more substantial comforts of self-made civilization. The pioneer and the settler, the frontiersman and the backwoodsman, — these men all unwittingly stamped the consciousness of the early American artists with their own crude thoughts and brave spirits. Art was not yet understood to be an accessory to the joy of living. Such a conception would have been regarded as effeminate and foreign. Art was dimly supposed to be an expression of man's feeling in the presence of nature's vastness. Just as the dreamy schoolboy writes a poem on the Mountain of Life, and in attempting to explain the universe, reveals his young mind bare and fallow, all the ignorance and the reverence and the expectant wonder of it, so the early American painter stood on a mountain-top and painted the glorious panorama as far as his eye could see. Perhaps he became as philosophical and allegorical as the schoolboy. Perhaps he tried to get everything into his picture, to account for every leaf on the trees of the farthest horizon. It was all very bad painting and not to be considered art at all. Nevertheless, it was also very young and promising. The great American school of landscape painting grew out of this beginning. Such men as Martin, Inness, Wyant, and Homer passed through their period of primitive æsthetic excitement before they attained to their clear comprehension of art as unity of expression. American

MOONLIGHT, TARPON SPRINGS

By George Inness

painters to-day have become cosmopolitan but not eclectic. They are thoroughly national. The American old masters pointed the way they should go and they have followed them.

Winslow Homer saw his opportunity on the coast of Maine. There he lived the life of a hermit, responding to the ocean's every mood, thrilling to the epic of man and the elements, the age-long conflict of the rocks and the waves. The Gloucester fishermen on their reeling decks, in fog and storm and shine; their life of danger on the treacherous sea; their womenfolk on the rocky purple headlands, straining their eyes into the threatening distance for the first glimpse of the fleet's home-coming; — these elemental things Homer knew how to make soul-stirring. And Inness, with the heart of a great poet and a genius for colour, second to no modern master, Inness saw into the very soul of American landscape; saw the scarlet and gold of its maple trees in the haze of Indian summer, the dramatic life of its skies when storms reverberate in the hills, the opulence of its wide harvest-fields, the desolation of its waste places, the glory of sunset transfiguring its meadows, the mellow poetry of moonrise beyond the warm, sweet gloom of its fragrant pine groves of the south. Buoyancy of normal healthful spirit, free from all constraint of tradition, and combined with a natural frankness, and an eloquent enthusiasm, and an ardent love of life, these are the qualities which Homer and

Inness inherited from their primitive ancestors and handed on to the American painters of the present day.

Upon this firm foundation of national character has now been laid much culture and technical training from abroad. Small men indeed have become eclectic with overmuch knowledge and insufficient inspiration. But the larger men have recognized the need of recording our own life and landscape with our own sense of beauty and of truth. Our painters excel with colour and in the creation of all kinds of atmosphere. Although we make haste slowly, we are none the less progressive in our art. The interiors of Tarbell are Vermeer brought up to date. American taste is chiefly characterized by its moderation, its modification of the good technical ideas originated in the studios of Europe. An attempt has recently been made to introduce into American art libertine excesses of technical experiment with forms and colours. But the American is to be trusted. We may invent and support yellow journals, we may tolerate agitators and exalt demagogues, we may allow all sorts of imposters to make their blatant sensations and parade their incredible claims, but we reserve our better judgment, our sober second thought. Loving excitement all too well, and demanding to be kept in a state of constant surprise, we even enjoy being shocked, and have no time and patience for subtleties and delicacies that do not shout for our attention

amid the bewilderments of modern life. Yet all this is well enough if we look at it from the proper philosophical distance. We are really far more sensation-loving than sensational. People who are really turbulent and lawless are seeking notoriety because life bores them. They are suffering from ennui, from enervating spiritlessness. There is absolutely none of this dangerous element in the American character. On the contrary, we love life so much that we have not yet acquired the repose and the well-poised detachment needful for contemptuously disregarding what is worthless and seeking out only what is best. In art we express altogether too much, but our expression is at least invariably honest and inspired by genuine enthusiasm.

Everything points to the coming of an American Renaissance — our mingling of races, our material prosperity, our wonderland of natural beauties, our steel mills and skyscrapers fit for glorious decorations, our eagerness of invention, our buoyancy of spirit, our contact with nature's big thoughts and big emotions in mountain, prairie, harbour and forest, our moulding of the elements to our purpose in swamp, desert, quarry and mine. We are not as a nation imaginative, but we are appreciative and sensitively observant. Who knows whether there shall not be an American realist greater than Velasquez? If the American Federation of Arts can unite all the æsthetic impulses of our people, if it can impel them to

strive together with a common purpose, namely, the creation of a national art, encouraged and upheld by the national Government, then the inevitable Renaissance will be the sooner in coming. Even now this organization is doing excellent work, spreading culture, diffusing instruction, unobstrusively inspiring æsthetic observation and feeling. Our wealth buys old masters, our energy produces new masters, our generosity exhibits pictures new and old from coast to coast. Because our desire for knowledge extends even to the technical experiments of the foreign studios and because our shrewd common sense helps us to distinguish the good from the bad when it comes to the point of selection, we shall continue to be at the same time conservative and progressive. Not only does America inherit the arts of all nations and of all ages, but rich should be the harvesting and exquisite the flowering of the strong, sound and aspiring American spirit from the seeds of æsthetic purpose, now so wisely and so bountifully being sown in her own native soil.

VI

THE CITY IN PAINTING AND ETCHING

ONE of the most propitious signs of our artistic awakening may be recognized in our new acknowledgment of elements pictorial and even poetic in the modern city. It is difficult for us to relinquish a notion that the world of industry and commerce is an ugly and prosaic one. Now we are called upon to see in this same ugliness something positively beautiful. And we do begin to see it. We begin to see that the city reveals the character of an epoch and that the spirit of our modernity is, at least, the most appropriate thing for us to express. Art is mere artifice unless it is the response of a genuine impulse, a genuine need that has compelled its creation. And architecture is merely the name we give to the task of planning how best in the construction of our buildings we may make beauty serve utility in accord with the eternal fitness of things. The skyscraper rose higher and higher on our streets, not aspiring to be beautiful but to be useful, to solve the problem of how to raise a huge edifice on a small plot of valuable land. This imperious invasion of upper air for the purposes of extend-

ing business seems to us now from our present vantage point something titanic and typical of our time. Yet from ten to twenty years ago we never looked at the skyscraper to admire it, nor conceived the thought that under sun-flushed morning mist, or the slant sunset light, it might be, in a rare and stirring way, a thing of beauty. Now we are all ready to stand sponsor for this new American architecture which is so sincere and original, and we are all willing to acknowledge in its appearance not only something inherently picturesque, but unconsciously symbolical. And so, more in America perhaps than in any other country, the townscape has become a very formidable rival of the landscape in painting and in other pictorial arts.

Now that the city is such a favorite subject for representation in pictures it is interesting to trace the beginning of the painter's responsiveness to the æsthetic possibilities of streets and buildings. If space permitted we could speculate upon the influence that prompted Ambrogio Lorenzetti to fresco an upper room in the beautiful townhall of Siena with his delectable view of a mediæval city prospering under good government. Giotto had supplied the realistic impetus. But here the life, not of Christ, but of the average man within the grim brick battlements, was apprehended as material for pictures. Later we could speak of that gay romancer, Carpaccio. There is a fascination about the pageants he portrayed and

their setting, the shimmering lagoons, the semi-Oriental towers and domes. Something of the fabulous glory of Venice in her day of pomp and power may be imagined. In the later period of her diminished importance she retained her proud beauty, but it is the more subtle appeal of faded splendour that Canaletto and Guardi immortalized in the eighteenth century. Very exquisitely did they paint for us the essential Venetian charms; delicate and yet sprightly colours; stately waterways traversed by ghostly gondolas; marble bridges and stairways; graceful balconies and loggias — all beneath that faint, long-lingering sunshine which in gracious melancholy is so like our Venice that remains.

These two painters responded to different phases of Venetian beauty. Canale for instance sought a clear and golden light, the general air of radiant well-being that envelopes such deep architectural perspectives as the Grand Canal curving down to the Rialto. Guardi, on the other hand, loved the pearly and mist-laden air and was sensitive to such passing impressions as impending rain, voyaging clouds, shadows falling across the house-tops of the Piazza, little animated figures catching the high-lights of the sun. Canale's style was a lucid and substantial prose, Guardi's a subtle and fragile poetry. But the earlier master, too, could extol his city in lyric fashion. In London's National Gallery there is a superb example of this impassioned realism. The

evening shadows are gradually darkening the green waters of a small canal where gondolas lie black and motionless. The recesses, too, of a stately church on the farther shore are already immersed, only the soaring bell-tower still glowing against the rich blue sky. The foreground is in a glory of golden light that seems to pour through the frame of the picture. Stone-carvers are finishing their work in and around a wooden shanty. Doubtless it is the wife of one of them who plays with her babies while from an upper window a servant chats with her. The house on the extreme right has walls of peeling rose-red plaster — well imitated by thick pigment over cracked canvas. These walls together with the arched balcony, the flowers and curtains of the windows, gleam transfigured in the radiant light. This is a vision of the long day's happiest hour.

In Holland, painters had earlier learned to look about them for subjects, and many are the Dutch townscapes. Pieter de Hooghe with his doors and windows opening on canals and court-yards, the sunlight streaming in, creates just the genial, shut-in sentiment of city life. His homes are delightful but the mind only needs his suggestions of brick walls and ampler air outside, to go a-wandering into the winding ways of seventeenth-century Amsterdam. Vermeer painted two city pictures and they are visions of entrancing loveliness. In his celebrated "View of Delft," the very textures of roofs and walls and steeples are imi-

tated with grainy pigment, and the illusion of mellow evening sunshine is truly miraculous. But in all this triumphant naturalism there is nothing literal. As also in the little street scene of the Six Collection the foliage of the trees is of a most delicious blue. And through all the singing colour harmony there is a pervading sentiment of dreamful quiet resting upon the little town and its pale canal; the peace and joy of all the golden evenings that ever were. Never since Vermeer painted this enchanting canvas has the evanescent effect of glowing sunlight and lengthening shadows over walls of solid masonry produced a result so lyrical. Van der Heyden was a more literal soul. His many admirable views of Dutch towns are full of interest but devoid of charm, and are painted with the detailed laboriousness of a Gerard Dou. However for devoting his life and art to the depiction of the city — the first painter to really appreciate the possibilities of the genre, he deserves great credit.

From the Dutch streets and canals of Van der Heyden to similar subjects in a radically different style by G. H. Breitner is a long leap, but in the intermediate two hundred years there are no noteworthy examples of successful townscape painting. Breitner is one of the stenographic impressionists bent on rapidly recording instantaneous effects. He either paints scenes of violent activity on the Rotterdam and Amsterdam docks, or the brown-and-white, peak-gabled houses bor-

dering the quiet canals of residential districts. His brushwork is extremely vigorous and he has a realist's sure instinct for strength of colour and of atmospheric illusion. I remember one particularly incisive transcript of a winter evening in a Dutch town. The foreground is a snow-covered bridge in the all but complete darkness of early nightfall. One may dimly distinguish a few belated pedestrians hurrying through the chill gloom. The observer is at once inside of the picture, seeking the lighted shop windows of the middle distance. But his attention is diverted by the incident of a sullen glow of reddish light persisting in the western sky. Such work as this is a digression from the Dutch pictorial tradition which has always laid more emphasis on surface beauty than strength and which has, in the nineteenth-century revival, tempered truth with sentiment. It is from Paris that Breitner's inspiration comes. There a school of specialists arose about 1860 — specialists in light and air, transient effects guaranteed, prosaic subjects selected by preference. The Paris of the theatres, the boulevard cafés, the public parks and bridges, offered them abundant opportunity for exciting experiments with conflicts and complexities of light. Manet, the chef d'école, depicted the bar at the Folies Bergères and an open-air concert in the Tuilleries Gardens, both daring studies of the animation of crowds and of the reflections and refractions of colour. Monet painted the

Gare Saint-Lazare just at the moment when a locomotive has rushed under the glazed dome. The smoke from the engine rises blue in the enclosed foreground and drifts away pink in the open sunlight beyond. Many years later in London this great painter did the best work of his career with such scenes as Waterloo Bridge in the blue of morning fog. The struggling sunlight tints with purest violet the murky sky and the ascending columns of smoke from factory chimneys, and violet reflections shimmer across the waters of the Thames. Pissarro, also, has painted London, although he is best known for his Parisian avenues with swarming crowds viewed from upper windows in various conditions of atmosphere such as wind and rain. To-day Paris is best portrayed by Raffaelli in paintings, etchings and lithographs. He emphasizes the vivacious pallor of the Champs Elysées, his sunshine there seeming ever faint and weary. He points with pride to the majesty of the Place de la Concorde and comments on the contrast of faces to be seen any summer's day on the Boulevard des Italiens. Each picture is a moment fraught with significance and eloquent with unspoken suggestion. Raffaelli knows his Paris.

It is the perennial answer of the artist when a critic complains that a picture is not thus and so — "I paint what I see." Exactly. But what an amazing variety there is to our human vision. For us who walk and drive about a city, catching

enjoyable impressions that at the time are almost entirely optical and untroubled by any preconceptions of our own, the city means a series of more or less vivid sensations, of colour, atmosphere, architecture, and abundant light and life, all blurred by the incessant movement and the constantly altered perspective. It was thus, representing the average man on the average street, that Manet, Monet, Degas and Renoir purposed to paint their Paris. But while this coterie of clever naturalists were rapidly recording the kaleidoscopic city scene with purely objective absorption in facts, a half-starved, half-crazed genius was etching all the terror and the torment of his soul in once seen, never to be forgotten visions of old Paris; visions that affect the observer with a sense of something abnormal and yet familiar, sinister and yet bewilderingly beautiful. In one of Meryon's famous plates the sun beats with pitiless glare upon the old Morgue and a haggard row of tall, white tenements huddled back of it. In the foreground a corpse is being carried up from the river — the scene sharply silhouetted against the white light on the gleaming stone parapet. But we do not need this touch of melodrama to accentuate the macabre impression. The old buildings of the background, drawn with the consummate art that conceals its wizardry, oppress the eye and the mind with mysterious glamour. Thus might we behold beauty in a feverish dream or in some

hour of intolerable depression. Marvellous, too, is Meryon's vision of "Le Stryge," the horned and winged Demon that with tongue outthrust, from the northwest tower of Notre Dame, broods in lascivious thought and luxurious satisfaction over Paris. To the depiction of this monster of mediæval fantasy, Meryon brought his own haunted imagination. Birds of prey swoop under the towers, and in the black shadows of the streets below evil secrets are in the air, crime might well be lurking around any corner. Joseph Pennell relates that once when he was sketching up among these eerie gargoyles he was surprised by the arrival of Whistler. The great painter had not, however, toiled up the painful stairway merely to enjoy the view. In fact he soon became nervous and restless among the strange demons, and was obviously unhappy until they were completely out of his sight and mind. This incident throws an important light on Whistler's real taste and temperament. He hated the grotesque and acutely resented the abnormal and the sensational. The city was to him a perpetual inspiration and the poetry of Nature which most painters go seeking in woods and fields, he could find in London. But only when it is dusk or night, when there is a flush in the gloaming or when the lamps are lit across the river and the blue, mysterious world glimmers far and near with sparks of gold. That he preferred the gentle illusions of an enchanted darkness to

the staring obviousness of the day is not surprising, but what may be at first disconcerting is that he carried this preference for intangible and inexplicable qualities to his choice of subjects. Although his dreams were expressed in simple terms of unmistakable reality — the atmosphere of his Nocturnes being truth itself — yet he never emphasized his observation. Just to show that the less there is to see, the more there is to feel, his carefully coloured wood panels and absorbent canvases were often undisturbed by any but the most tentative suggestions of form. And he invariably selected for depiction, both in painting and etching, not the far-famed sights of cities, but curiously casual bits that revealed his own discrimination; Venetian doorways and London fruit-stalls and suburban warehouses — remarkably unremarkable subjects about which he alone could say beautiful things and by the delicacy of his sight and touch convert the substance of prose into the essence of poetry. Of living artists, Frank Brangwyn perhaps has felt the poetry of cities most intensely. His is a powerful personality for whom the visible world is fraught with rich romance that is largely of his own making — a romance that he finds in the bridges and markets and wharves of London no less than in the mediæval guild-houses of Ghent and the domed mosques of the Orient. True individualists then can easily make their townscapes expressive of themselves — of the shape

and colour of their own minds, the key and tone of their own moods.

Before etchings of cities by Meryon, Whistler and Brangwyn we do not think of the cities depicted but of the artists themselves, the appeal of their individual style and of their original personalities. Before etchings of cities by Joseph Pennell, however, we instinctively exclaim as we glance hurriedly through a portfolio or around the walls of an exhibition — that is Paris, Chartres, Canterbury, London, New York, Pittsburgh. Each print is a portrait of the place it represents and a portrait full of the racial and the national as well as the local character of the subject. Pennell's Spanish cities are as unmistakably Spanish as his American cities are American. It is as easy for him to render the essential Castilian quality of Toledo on the Tagus as it would be for him to state all that is true of Ohio and at the same time picturesque in Toledo, the American town. He has sketched and etched in many lands and in each place, whether city or village, he has said just the right thing — no more, no less. Provided a place has a character of its own he will seize upon it and do it justice. If there is a possibility of poetic suggestion he will make the most of it. If it is merely a matter of fact he will resort to no mock heroics but will state the case with the learned strokes of a pencil or an etching needle, never at a loss to execute his intention — to reproduce exactly what his responsive mind

and eye have selected as artistic and significant. His pictures of New York skyscrapers are perhaps the summit of his achievement. They have genuinely thrilled him, these Towers of Babel, these incredible dream castles that are as real as their steel and stone construction and as symbolical of our national character as anything that a poet's imagination could have devised. In some of Pennell's views of the sky-line from the river the tall buildings stand all spectral and fantastic in the misty morning light. In others, we feel the height and bulk and clamour of the business districts during rush hours with a sense of overwhelming actualities. Childe Hassam is another artist of objective vision who can record with exceptional skill the pictorial inspiration of our mighty cities. He has painted down-town New York with a virile and a facile brush, painted the spire of Old Trinity dwarfed by the encircling hosts of steel-ribbed giants, painted Wall Street, seen from above, in whose bottom-most depths we note the frenzied ground whirl of humanity. Likewise the jagged silhouette of gaunt buildings on the waterfront he has portrayed under many conditions of atmosphere, and alike in the crystalline transparency of an autumn morning and the golden haze of a summer evening — the charm is irresistible. Then, too, he has rendered with Monet's spots and splashes the momentary impressions of rainy nights in the theatre district. The blurred lights,

the hurrying crowds under wet umbrellas, the glistening pavements, we see them all, not in detail but in that swift, all pervasive sense when the hurried glance rests upon nothing in particular but takes in everything in general. In others of his city scenes he will present the proud pageant of Fifth Avenue on Sunday mornings or perhaps some side street in the grip of a midwinter's evening. The snow lies deep and soggy in drifts and furrows, reflecting on the pavements the dim illumination from the lamp-posts, while the more genial light from within the houses only accentuates the outer chill and gloom. Cornoyer's realism is more subjective than Hassam's. There is a tang of melancholy about it. Or is it ennui? He expresses by preference the quiet mood that may be fostered even amid the unrest and the uproar by such a sight as Madison Square on a damp, dark afternoon, trees and streets slick with soft moisture, and the outlines of tall buildings in the distance lost in the gloom of low lying clouds. Then there is the mood of excitement so true to the dweller in cities. Bellows, Luks, Myers, Shinn, Hoffbauer and many others have essayed it — the excitement of little children of the East Side tenements dancing around a grind-organ, or the excitement of fire-engines in the dark, or of cigarettes after dinner on a down-town roof garden in the summer starlight, with searchlights playing from the harbour, and deep below the twinkling illumination of the streets. Such scenes

are as yet too real to yield us illusions. But the sense of their romance will grow. And what seems fascinating to us even now in views of skyscrapers and steel mills and harbour commerce and street traffic — with what new glamour shall they be invested when the eyes of future ages behold in them the true likeness of great American cities in the glorious days of the Republic. And not merely the show and the substance of them shall be known but also their significance. And the measure of historical importance that shall dignify those pictorial representations of cities shall in the end be identical with the measure of their importance as art. For only in so far as they can convey to the beholder the sense of visual impressions, not merely seen but felt, of moments vividly experienced, and then, by the ordered magic of mind and hand, transferred to canvas and paper — can they make what are but realistic observations for us, romantic visions for our children's children.

VII

ART FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH — AND BEAUTY

WE cannot properly appreciate that impressionism which is the impulse of all true pictorial art until we have brought an open mind to the consideration of the familiar dogma of the modern studio — "art for art's sake." Windy wars have been waged because of it. How it wearies the mind to think of all the cross purposes and jarring contentions! Art is certainly the richer for Whistler and his influence, but it is not because he wrangled and carefully recorded his quarrels with his critics, but because he painted pictures greater than his theories. That the seed of his æsthetic doctrines should have fallen upon inhospitable soil in Victorian England is not to be wondered at. Ruskin had taught his country either to copy Nature with painstaking fidelity or to embody exalted stories and sentiments for useful ends. Then along came Jimmy Whistler — asserting — (1) That the artist must pick and choose his notes from the world's keyboard — that "to paint Nature as she is, is to sit on the piano;" (2) That subjects are of extremely secondary importance — that a mountain is not necessarily

sublime if it is badly painted and that a suburban factory chimney in the evening gloom is not necessarily prosaic if properly seen and rendered. In short he insisted that a picture must exist for its own sake — that

> If eyes were made for seeing,
> Beauty is its own excuse for being.

To us this does not seem to be a very radical or unreasonable doctrine. Yet the Victorian critics blinked and sneered and the Victorian public stared and giggled. In his fight for painters' principles Whistler was practically unaided in England. In France, however, the battle had been waged and won. The stilted academic standards had been assailed and shaken by the concerted action of artists from Delacroix to Monet. With increasing strength their spirits rose and in angry defiance of continued clamour for subject pictures many men went to sensational extremes. Art for art's sake was then popularly and quite justly interpreted to mean not art for truth's or beauty's sake, but art for the sake of technique, art for the sake of canvas covered thus and thus, for the sake of pigments so applied from the tubes, and brushes so manipulated, art for the sake of absolute values, and refraction, and vibration, and broken tones, and a hundred other technical terms that are secrets of the few, obscure and unhallowed mysteries to the many. As notorious as the crimes that have been committed through the ages in the name of Liberty

are the crimes perpetrated within recent years in the name of Art. For artists have been fairly rioting in revolution and proclaiming a new dogma of their own in place of the discredited ones of the ancien régime. It is no longer art for the sake of the Church, for the sake of the Court, for the sake of Greek marbles, for the sake of the school or fireside interest in literature and history, but art for the sake of the artist, art for its own sweet sake. In effect the painter has been saying to the public — "You have made us tell stories, now you can watch us dabble in raw materials and experiment with light and air. Our experiments will be helpful to us and bewildering to you. We have long realized that painting was falling behind the times, that we were not reflecting the life around us, that the scientific enlightenment of our age had passed us by, as if we were not concerned with truth and the whole truth. Now we shall make up for lost time. As for you — it will do you no harm to regard art in a new light, as no longer a subservient thing, but independent of you and your ideas, with a point of view and a dogma of its own. For centuries you have made us come to you to serve you. Now we shall see and paint what we choose and as we choose. You may take us or leave us."

So rang the challenge and strange was the result of it. For a while people laughed at the

French innovators, labelling them fantastics and barbarians, and all his life Whistler had a lively time of it with critics and a public who believed that his art like his outer life was a studied pose and an ill-natured joke. But what obscurity had never done for their more conservative predecessors in artistic progress, notoriety secured for these radicals and their teeming progeny. With that ever-familiar, ever-curious irony of Fate, the pendulum of public opinion swung from one extreme to the other, and painters awoke to find the crowd they had affected to despise, swarming to their exhibitions and teasing them like amusement-seeking boys, to be as unconventional as they dared. Soon the house of art became a vaudeville, a workshop, a lecture room, a laboratory, all too seldom a temple for the soul. There have been instances of paintings more scientific, certainly less synthetic than science. As for the notorious performers known as Post Impressionists and Cubists their grotesque caricatures are evidently based upon the impudent assumption that people now-a-days will tolerate anything provided its novelty is proclaimed loud enough. The truth is that whereas a hundred years ago painters were tinting Greek and Roman statues, because they feared to take any liberties with the banal, timorous public taste that frowned on innovation, to-day we are suffering from an excess of public tolerance in regard to art, an actual encouragement of any hitherto untried

experiment in the making of pictures. One truth has been conclusively proved. The cavalier declaration that art could do without the public was either a blunder or a bluff. Art exists for and by the consent of the public. Almost from the beginning painters have protested against the prevailing popular misconception of what art ought to be. Of course there was a time when painting was but a step removed from penance and from prayer. At work in mystic consecration upon his wooden saints and madonnas, the friar in his cell was blessedly insensible to the impieties of beauty. Browning's Pictor Ignotus thrilled to know that on his frescoes there was no suggestion of grace and charm, no figment of truth to life nor resemblance to that outer world whose vanities he had renounced forever. He rejoiced that although he might have won favour and fortune out in the shrill sunshine, his painted confession of faith would moulder and fade away on chill monastic walls. But all this was before the spirit of art was born. Soon enough a strange joy came to the friar at his work. Voices and scents were borne to him on the restless winds seeming to call him to that outer world. Browning pictured him in this mood, his Lippo Lippi hungry for life and love. We may see how this human passion passed into his altar-paintings in protest. The devotional piety of the Flemish and Italian Primitives was in many cases genuine and charming. But even in such a devout spirit as

Memlinc, what I prize most is the lively enamelled colour and the little blue-and-brown peeps of tapestry landscape that the painter shily introduced as background to indulge himself in a dash of self-expression. Giorgione was the first to completely break away from ecclesiastical domination, and it was he who originated genre and the idyllic sentiment for pure landscape. But few were the men who dared to do more than protest against the prevailing fashions, as Watteau with his air of inscrutable melancholy protested against the frivolity which he was forced to paint for a frivolous age. The really great artists who declared war against the teaching of the schools and the taste of the buyers, were all but submerged in consequence. Witness the poverty of Rembrandt and of Millet. But to-day extremists reap the benefit of their epoch-making courage, and now that eccentricity is at a premium where in their day formula was law, the wildest ventures are more profitable than was their noble moderation. Of course the public does not change from age to age as much as these changes in artistic fashion would seem to indicate. The trouble is that there has always existed, through all the changes of thought and taste, throughout periods of slavery, prosperity and obscurity for the artist, the same total ignorance of the conditions that govern and limit pictorial expression. Art cannot exist without some appreciative understanding. If left to himself, the

painter goes to one extreme, the public to the other, and great is the confusion. Mr. Whistler then to the contrary — I hold that the critic of art who can appreciate both points of view and act as mediator between them performs an indispensable function. He it is who must see to it that the artist is fair to the world and that the world is fair to the artist.

But before either of these desirable results can be secured the artist and the world must be equally well acquainted with the various mediums of artistic expression, their individual capacities and limitations. They must know that painting cannot tell a story, that it can only represent a moment's situation. They must know that it may deal with thought or emotion, but only in-so-far as these things may be comprehended in the colour and form through the direct agency of the uninstructed and unaided sense of sight. In Sir John Millais' picture "The Huguenot," the obvious sentiment is at least legitimate. From such a fond embrace we could not possibly fail to receive the impression of romantic love. But that white scarf, indicating to those who happen to have read about the subject that the girl has tied an emblem around her lover's arm in order to shield him from massacre, that scarf could only be excused if it served some æsthetic purpose, which in this case it does not. It baffles alike the æsthetic sense which is not concerned with historical data

and the mind which happens to be ignorant of or inattentive to its historical significance. The defenders of the story-telling picture make much of the fact that Rembrandt depicted incidents from the Bible. But can they point to a single canvas in which documentary evidence of a scriptural or archæological character has distracted the eye from the essential unity of æsthetic and emotional impression? At the Hague Gallery David plays his harp before Saul. Although we may not hear the music, our sight comprehends at a glance the effect which the harpist is producing upon the mind of the king. Meanwhile our eyes are feasting upon the dazzling iridescence of Saul's turban, its mingled tones of copper and bronze, scarlet and green and gold. And as we gaze a spell of sensuous witchery stirs us, like the spell of some soul-disturbing rhapsody of sound. As in all great subjective paintings the title has been only a pretext. We have beheld the glamour and shared the passion of one of Rembrandt's passing moods. Then again consider the little "Supper at Emmaus" in the Louvre. The face of Christ oppresses us with a sense of sharp, familiar suffering and at the same time uplifts our hearts to a vision of Divine inspiration and spiritual perfection. We do not need to note the awe and worship of the disciples at this sudden revelation of their dead and risen Master for do we not share their emotion, are we not also in the radiant presence of that incarnate

SUPPER AT EMMÆUS

By Rembrandt

goodness that lifts the burdens of the world? This is not merely Christ as He appeared at Emmaus, this is the Saviour as the afflicted and inspired Rembrandt conceived Him for his own consolation, and as we in our sorrows would think of Him to the end of time. This is not a story nor yet an incident from a story. It is a vision and a strong, sweet thought. How wonderful it is that simple technical skill achieved this miracle of spiritual expression. The technique is invisible in the subject and the subject one with the sentiment. Such is pictorial art at its highest and best.

To the familiar dogma of our present epoch that the worth of a painting can only be estimated by its technical merits, regardless of subject matter, Rembrandt's "Supper at Emmaus" is sufficient refutation. It is almost without colour and without distinction of design and it reveals absolutely no technical feature which would give it any great éclat, not even this painter's usual dramatization of light. Its supreme mastery is evidenced rather in the amazing inspiration that brushed in that incomparable face. It may be said that the picture is great because of the art that produced it, but how much less great that art would have been if the painter had not been inspired by a great subject. Unquestionably a copper stew-pan by Chardin, true to life yet transfigured by his charm of touch, is a nobler

work of art than a head of Christ crowned with thorns in the cheap and perfumed style of Guido Reni. On the other hand the unpretentious observations of copper stew-pans do not make for the very greatest art. The humility of such conceptions is in striking contrast to the philosophy of art as practiced and preached by the great stern symbolist J. F. Watts. By means of pictorial symbols, he sought to embody the eternal verities and mysteries of life and death, to reduce Creation to its primordial elements and to teach and preach the brave old moralities with that unselfconscious seriousness so characteristic of the Victorian epoch. Watts was born in the belief that art should be brought to the service of life, that art for art's sake is no better than ritual for ritual's sake. "The idea of following art through everything for itself alone," writes Gilbert Chesterton in his brilliant book on Watts, "through extravagance, cruelty and morbidity, is exactly as superstitious as the idea of following theology for itself alone through extravagance, cruelty and morbidity. The young critics of the æsthetic school with their nuances and technical mysteries would doubtless be surprised to learn that as a class they resemble ecstatic nuns, but their principle is in reality the same." Watts was one of those universalists who thought that just as the ecstatic isolation of the religious sense had done incalculable harm to religion, so the ecstatic isolation of the æsthetic sense would do incalculable harm to

art. It was his firm intention therefore to present great natural truths and great moral ideas and it so chanced that to express these things he selected for his medium a pictorial symbolism of colour and form. So perfectly did his symbols illuminate and exalt his noble but unoriginal ideas that they served his purpose in putting new vitality into venerable thoughts. His educational purpose was accomplished through the happy accident of a profoundly original pictorial genius. There was a sublime unity to his conceptions, a unity into which vague, allegorical or topical allusions seldom intruded, a unity so clear that the world of abstract thought seemed to spring unlaboured into shape and colour beneath his brush. Pictures have no business dealing with symbols unless they can present them without the slightest infraction of the laws of pictorial unity. Furthermore, they must improve upon language as a means of conveying thought, else they are worse than useless. In some of Watts' pictures the colours are harsh and in others the meaning seems imprisoned rather than liberated by the design. As a rule, however, he was splendidly successful, notably in his deeply symbolical portraits of men and in such immortal creations as the picture entitled "Hope." On the orb of the globe in the blue of our cosmic twilight sits the stricken form of a young girl blindfolded. Yes, this is Hope. For, see, the bowed and suffering figure clasps in her

arms a broken harp; one string alone remains taut, but this she twangs resolutely, pressing it closer and ever closer to her ear to catch its lingering sweet vibrations. The simple design, the even simpler colour scheme, convey the meaning directly to our sense of sight. Now what is the best that literature can do with this subject, expressed, as a symbol should be, without elaboration? I suppose it is the old hackneyed quotation "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Watts' picture is decidedly preferable. How beneficently then an unsuspected power within an artist supplements and ennobles his limited intentions! Whistler proposed no more for himself than a decorative unity of lines, an atmospheric valuation of tones, and a harmonious modulation of colours. In spite of his railing against subjects and sentiments however, it is spiritual sentiment rather than any æsthetic "note" that will cause his Nocturnes to endure, and in the best of his portraits he owed much of his success to the inspiration of his subjects. And so it was with Watts, whose art was conceived for the general good, but whose pictures are more likely to appeal to such critics of the subtler phases of beauty as can appreciate with what unique pictorial intuition and skill he gave original colour and form to unoriginal abstractions.

It is quite true that the art of painting deals by preference with the concrete rather than the

abstract, with the evidence of things seen rather than with any intangible fabric of thought. Watts, however, demonstrated that thought may be given a deeper and intenser life through concrete form and colour than is the life of thoughts which, although forming and colouring the mind, have never found pictorial symbols identical with themselves. Now, even as Watts disregarded the rule that painting should avoid the abstract, so Rodin has been demolishing our traditional conception of sculpture as an art steeped in convention and remote from the life around us, a Greek world of embodied ideals and abstractions. That sculpture may be concrete and individual in character was first revealed by the Gothic craftsman in his gargoyles and statued saints. What the Italian Renaissance then accomplished was to make sculpture pictorial and expressive of personal conceptions. It remained for Rodin to apply realism as well as imagination to the plastic depiction of life. We properly think of painting as Gothic in origin and of sculpture as essentially Classic, yet the genius of Watts the painter was Classic and of Rodin the sculptor Gothic. Gilbert Chesterton once wrote, with more sobriety than is characteristic of his customary epigram, that Pagan art deals with a light shining *on* things, Christian art with the light shining through them. To put it in another way, the classical artist has the detachment of vision that would rest content with giving simple

and final substance to thought, whereas the Gothic artist draws ceaselessly upon his fervent imagination to draw thought from substance. Watts, influenced by Plato and Pheidias, aspired to give symbolical shape to the epic oneness of creation. Rodin, influenced by Dante and Donatello, tries to reveal subtleties of sense and emotion, to give shape not to life's epic oneness, but rather to its dramatic many-sidedness. Most sculpture is abstract and static, Rodin's is concrete and dynamic. Put his "Penseur" by the side of a marble Faun of ancient Greece and behold the difference between the virile animal body of Man — shaken with passion and aspiring purpose, and the serenely exquisite body of the old myth-maker's dream. Most sculptors, following the classic standards, convert life into art. Rodin converts the raw materials of his craft into a new creation, a re-shaping of his hired models so that they live again as symbols of elemental things, of Man in his ugliness and splendid strength, his power and his pity; of Woman in her tenderness and irresistible grace, her yielding and withholding. And in leaving his creations unsevered from the mass of marble or bronze, he suggests the organic union of life and art, life that is the root of art, art that is the flower of life. All art is symbolical since art can only appeal to the intelligence through signs representing a thought or a thing. But what a difference may exist between two symbols, both

precious and indispensable in their own way, for instance, between a peach imitated from life by Chardin and "The Mystery of Existence" shaped in bronze by St. Gaudens. The mystery of existence in bronze, how vast the daring of it! You may see this marvellous, nameless creation in a suburban cemetery near the city of Washington. A draped figure sits erect at the side of the tomb. The body is rigid yet under firm control. Only the face is bared and the lean, strong arm which supports it. The features are also fixed and the unseeing eyes gaze into infinity. This is neither Man nor Woman, for it is both. This is something sexless — universal — inscrutable. A figure of Grief one might divine, but grief seldom is so passionless. The eyes have the rigidity of eyes that can no longer weep, of a soul from which even hope has long since fled. Is this then "Despair"? Some have suggested "Nirvana," the oblivion for which the Oriental yearns. But the artist who made this thing would never give his symbol a definite title. Once only he is quoted as remarking — "What did I mean to express? Oh, I suppose, the mystery of the whole affair." One thinks of Shakespeare, of the significant lines

> "We are such stuff as dreams are made on,
> And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

To those then who claim that the pictorial and plastic arts are incapable of properly expressing

thought and emotion, and should confine their efforts to the production of visual effects, æsthetic or scientific, there is only one answer. The painter has just as much right to describe his thoughts through colour and form as the writer to describe his observations through language. The only rule that each must observe is — "To your own art be true." When the writer is attempting a landscape or a portrait, he must keep his readers mindful that his pictures are only painted with words, literary suggestions of pictures, and when the painter is trying to express his thoughts, he must give them each a visual unity of conception so that, intent only on the colours and forms, we may look not for literary ideas but for the pictorial suggestions of ideas. Emphatically paintings can and should deal with the mind and the emotions, provided they act through the direct agency of the eyes. And so, if we are informed that the subjects of pictures do not matter, let us merely point to Rembrandt's "Supper at Emmaus" and enquire wherein lies the greatness of this little canvas save in the inspiration the artist derived from his subject. And if they tell us that painting cannot embody thought, nor sculpture draw thought from substance, let us lead them to Watts and to Rodin and allow these giants to speak for themselves. Finally, if in turn we wish to demonstrate that the true artists among the advocates of art for art's sake do not mean all that they say nor practice all that they

preach, we need go no farther for an illustration than Whistler's portrait of his mother. This is primarily a very personal, a very beautiful tribute to motherhood. Yet it is at the same time a decorative design of originality and charm. And here we may know the reason why Whistler is a greater painter than Watts. He was always true to his art, always decorative. For, in the last analysis, although painting may incidentally be useful, instructive, entertaining, edifying or the reverse of these things, its original and fundamental function is not intellectual but æsthetic, not to criticise life but to decorate it. It may imitate a peach or express the sympathy of Christ, but in either case its highest purpose is to create a thing of beauty that shall be to us a joy forever. Life indeed contains all that we need of beauty, the constituents of all colour, the materials of all form. But alas, while a wonderful accident of light is for a moment transforming our earth into a realm of enchantment, we are thinking of the price of a certain commodity in a certain market, or of what we said last week and wish we hadn't said, or perhaps we are not thinking at all. And verily we have eyes and see not and the beauty of the moment passes as if for us it had never been. But the true artist and the genuine lover of art, the creator who finds pictures in nature and the critic who finds nature in pictures, they have eyes if they have nothing else. They may be without the price of a meal ticket, but

they possess the sense of beauty and as long as they nourish and cherish such a living joy in their hearts, life may be tragic or sordid, but never uninteresting. The ascent of the mountain of endeavour may seem to them a particularly steep and arduous pilgrimage but they will never be blind to the beauties on the way, they will always find time to draw deep breaths of tonic air and enjoy the view. And whether or not they scale the mountain to its cloudy pinnacle, as long as they breathe the air that is made of dreams there is nothing so real but shall have a fascination, and nothing so strange but imagination can make it real. And the creators who see beauty and feel it, and then through a mystical wizardry of their own, record it with a new glamour which, but for them, we should never have known, they are the harps through which the winds of all experience may play. The influence of great art upon receptive spirits is as great as any influence on earth. Great art passes into our consciousness, there to abide. We may no longer see the morning sunlight stream across a space of bare white wall or fall upon a piece of deep blue velvet without thinking how Vermeer could quicken the pulse of æsthetic pleasure with his transcripts of just such simple things. We may no longer feel the spell of woodland twilight when the dew silvers the tremulous green leaves, and the apricot glow of dawning or departing day flushes the far horizons, without summoning the

joyous spirit of Corot and entering once more that spirit-land from which it is such effort to awake. I remember a little picture in Amsterdam, by that unique painter Matthew Maris, which stirred me strangely when I saw it, and which haunts me yet. It was a subtle effect of atmosphere, a village street in partial shadow, its quaint gray houses dark against a sky all flooded with white light. Somewhere I had seen just such an effect. Suddenly a lost moment was restored to me and recorded on canvas, a rare, rich moment of unusual perception selected from ten thousand by a man who knew how to see, by an artist who could give his vision permanence. That is pictorial art in its essential relation to life; art for the sake of nothing save only Beauty, and for the sake of that incomparable joy with which Beauty thrills the soul.

VIII

IMPRESSIONISM IN PROSE

IN the arts of painting and sculpture the meaning of the word Impressionism seems obvious enough. It is almost self-evident that for the mind to formulate what the eye has seen implies the existence of a mental impression, and for the hand to transfer that impression intact into visible symbols of colour and form, so that, with its original thrill preserved and crystallized, it may be shared by all, implies the possession of that skill which we associate with successful accomplishment in all the representative arts. In attempting now to analyze what is impressionistic in literature, is it not reasonable to apply the same test, to search for the same unified and definite mental impression, expressed in unified and definite symbols, not this time of colour and clay but of words? When we find a poem, or a story, or a description, or a criticism, in which we recognize the author's purpose to conceive and his power to create an accurate transcript of that which has impressed him definitely and vividly, then surely we have to do with that similarly emotional sense of single effects which in the representative arts we call Impressionism.

Every good painter knows that the important thing for him to keep in mind is that there must be an emotional unity to his conception and a visual unity to his creation. There are many rules to observe, rules for the most decorative design of a given space and for the best pictorial representation of a chosen subject. But they can all be summed up in the one word Unity. The colour must work in sympathy with the design in order to affect the eye with one and only one sensation. If the lines, instead of being carefully balanced and co-ordinated in a deliberate arrangement, strike off on their own initiative, cutting a picture into two parts, or worse yet, one and a half, and if the colours are unfriendly to each other and heedless of that unity of ensemble which must prevail between them in order to establish tone, then the decorative phase of the painter's work will be a failure. And it is no less true that there must be one subject to a picture and only one; one impression impressed upon the observer, and everything that does not contribute to that one impression ruthlessly suppressed or sacrificed. For in the last analysis the impression *is* the picture.

Now this Unity — unity of subject and of treatment — must also be strictly observed whenever in the art of literature the writer purposes to create and leave upon the mind one definite impression. It may be a word-picture that he wishes to paint — a portrait, a genre, a landscape.

In any case he must go about his task with the same principles and the same care in observing them by judicious use of language as the painter with his brushes and pigments. Then again it may be a phrase which shall cheer the spirit with a blithe joy or trouble it with a vague oppression; or perhaps the recall of a dream which, in its turgid flow of tired thoughts, generally remains in the memory, if it remains at all, with a definite character to its own particular chaos; or the embodiment of a moment's fancy; or the definition of a fleeting sensation; or the recognition of a passing mood. Many literary forms are inadequate mediums for such impressions. There must be a condensation and economy of means, a scrupulous expression of only one thing at a time that would rob the world of some of its finest wisdom and imagination if applied to epic, elegiac, or idyllic poetry, to history, philosophy, prolonged narrative and the more ambitious kinds of drama. Impressionistic methods may be employed to advantage in any of these literary forms, but the impressionistic principle should never be allowed to control invention so as to become either a barrier to thought or a check to fancy.

In spite of the fact that, as Pater pointed out, romantic temperament and classic taste have existed almost from the beginning of literature, the impressionism which is the product of their union, at least impressionism in prose, is distinctly

a modern development. Before its specialized appeal could be comprehended the banner of "art for art's sake" had to be flaunted broadcast, and if not unchallenged, at least followed by many and respected by all as a new force to be reckoned with. To-day, it is most clearly seen in such typical modern mediums as the subjective criticism and description, in such typically modern artists as Walter Pater, Lafcadio Hearn and John Galsworthy. In the most intimate books of these great artists are to be found those fascinating subtleties of perception and delicacies of expression, and those unified effects of allied strangeness and beauty, which, I dare to suggest, might properly be recognized as representative of what is best in literary impressionism.

WALTER PATER

Although certainly one of the most unique and brilliant writers in the history of English literature, it is extremely doubtful whether Walter Pater will ever be popular with the general public. His appeal during his life was confined to those students of what is exquisite and somewhat exotic in art who, as Arthur Symons put it, "take their artistic pleasures consciously, deliberately and critically with the learned love of the amateur." And so it must ever be with such an artist as Pater. To the many for whom things æsthetic are merely high-sounding names his writings must seem both affected and arti-

ficial. He is, however, among friends, in the company of those kindred spirits who really understand what it means to live a moment's experience to its utmost capacity, to keep eye and mind, spirit and sense wide awake to every influence of strangeness and beauty, and to cherish, in spite of bewildering pre-occupations, "one's own dream of a world." One of our most scholarly critics, Paul Elmer More, recently reopened an old case against Pater — his principal charge being that as chief of the so-called Æsthetic School of Philosophy, he disregarded ethics and unwittingly enervated impressionable youth with luxurious phrases that presented a perverted estimate of life's values. Now to insinuate, as Mr. More evidently means to do, that Pater's thought was immoral because it was in substance frankly unmoral — is to propound the dogma that literature unlike the other arts may not stimulate the sense of pure beauty, the appreciation of art for its own sake. No one would think of condemning a pastoral by Giorgione or a Nocturne by Chopin because the didactic element in each is lacking. In spite of the fact that such creations are altogether unmoral, they never fail to quicken our sense of the loveliness that enriches the world, and we are grateful for the pure pleasure that they bring. It is just this quality which distinguishes the prose of Walter Pater — a lyrical quality of style which stirs the pulses through inherent

glamour, a lyrical quality of mind which perceives and reveals what is lyrical in art and life. We must not go to Pater for instruction nor for edification. We must go to him as we go to Giorgione and to Chopin for the delicate beauty that will charm and soothe us and gently minister to our passing moods.

Some philosophers and critics have discovered that Pater was neither a philosopher nor a critic, but on the contrary a disturber of sound principles in philosophy and criticism. No one would have been more willing to admit the truth of these contentions than Pater himself. He realized that his way of thought was that of the whimsical and dreamful artist rather than of the authoritative scholar and connoisseur. Never did he try to force his ideas upon an unwilling or incredulous ear, never was he intolerant or impatient with those who cared more for the substantial structure of facts than the filmy illusions of dreams. That in giving voice to his reflections he chose to appear as the philosopher rather than as the poet was the natural consequence of his realization that he was endowed not merely with the perfect sense of beauty, but with the far more exceptional power of tracking through translucent analysis the joy of an æsthetic sensation to its source. For him there was a rapture in clear thinking and critical discernment. He was altogether out of sympathy with the philosophy that deals only in abstrac-

tions, the philosophy that in Michelet's phrase "muddles the mind methodically." Philosophy, he thought, should serve culture. "For us of the modern world, distracted by so bewildering an experience, the problem of unity with ourselves in blitheness and repose is far harder than it was for the Greek within the simple terms of antique life. The pure instinct of self-culture cares not so much to reap all that these various forms of culture can give, as to find in them its own strength, to struggle with them till the secret is won from each. The demand of the intellect is ever to feel itself alive." This passage from the essay on Winckelmann clearly expresses the dominant motive of Pater's life and art. Pater was an oracle in the temple of Beauty, an interpreter of strange dreams and secrets of the soul. His original achievements were two. He created a new art, the art of imaginative criticism, and he dared to emphasize the idea that spirit and sense may be very closely allied — that actual sensation depends upon the spirit for potency of effect and that spiritual emotion may be cradled and nurtured by the senses.

In criticism no less than in philosophy the genius of Pater was subjective. Although seldom speaking in the first person singular, and thus avoiding the appearance of egotism, Pater was really so self-centred that he could only understand his own point of view. He always selected for analysis such artists as could give him hints

of delicate emotions and subtle conceptions quickened, through sympathetic suggestion, within his own brain. His "Marius," and others of his imaginary portraits, were but masks behind which he could give way freely to his own moods. They are only shadowy phantoms of the mind — these characters he fashioned; the mere fabric of day dreams — the outward semblance of souls apprehended at their unguarded hours. It was their maker's guiding principle as critic to regard "all works of art and the fairer forms of nature as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less unique kind." It was his aim to analyze these sensations and to distinguish the peculiar quality in a landscape or book or person that could produce so fine a thrilling of the mind and the emotions. Once dimly yet vividly discovered, as we discover secrets in a dream, this inner quality gave him ample opportunity for far flights of creative fancy and of imaginative reason. So — from the mysterious eyes and mouth of Leonardo's Lady Lisa a hint of something eternally subtle and disquieting stirred his brain to that famous fantasy on "a beauty wrought out from within," "the deposit little cell by cell of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions;" a troubled beauty into which "the soul with all its maladies has passed." Da Vinci's adventurous passion for experiment with potential elements of mind and matter enchanted Pater so that he represented him as a

dreamer seeking "glimpses of beauty and terror in the strange eyes of chance people whom he followed about the streets of Florence till the sun went down." We are granted a vision of a mysterious genius, haunting and overwhelming his friends "like one who comes across them by chance on some secret errand." In paintings of the school of Giorgione he delighted in various anticipations of modern impressionism, in accidental effects of light over lovely landscapes, in the rapid transition of thought on eager faces, in the sense of make-believe or, better yet, of music "as of an instrument sounded in the twilight as one passes through an unfamiliar room in a strange company." And in nearly all his subjects he found himself. In Wordsworth he detected his own love of retrospect and "impassioned contemplation," in Lamb, his own fine sense of words and of the "little arts of happiness in life," in Coleridge his own passion for metaphysical synthesis and the allure of mingled strangeness and beauty. But nearest to him of all the artists of the past whom he so eagerly studied was Watteau, truly the "Prince of Court Painters;" he who rehearsed the garden-comedy of life on "windless afternoons, with the storm always brooding through the massy splendour of the trees;" who in his mellow visions seemed to be cherishing a dream of spiritual elegance and grace, sad with the fear that such a thing could never be.

Very fascinating are the subjects of Pater's studies and dreams, subjects that fascinate even in bare outline and quite overpower the receptive mind when coloured and shaped to a semblance of life in days of old, not of necessity as it actually was, but as it might have been, as we might acknowledge it to have been, could we actually have known the secrets of a vanished artist's innermost intention, could we actually have heard the talk, and caught the spirit of a vanished epoch. Passing through the alembic of a modern scholar's revery, through a poet's decorative imagination and a psychologist's refinement of insight, history and legend, art and literature take on new glamour that is less than half their own. It is entirely conceivable that standing before a painting by Botticelli our thoughts should wander to Pater's criticism of the painting — that we should thus come to realize that the painting means less to us than the criticism. We Anglo-Saxons are a blunt, outspoken race, never prone to fall in love with subtleties of perception and delicacies of expression. In fact we are inclined to be suspicious of a man whose mind we cannot easily understand, and a little contemptuous also if, in all seriousness, he keeps talking or writing without apparently intending either to teach or preach. We demand, in art as in life, a solid foundation of common sense, and it is quite true that our greatest artists have possessed that essential sanity of genius which conquers not

merely the sensitive culture of the few but the sympathetic intelligence of the many. For this reason Walter Pater can never be a popular favourite, but in good time he surely will come unto his own. Then shall scholars no longer find fault with his scholarship nor protest politely about his principles. They will then acclaim him the Keats of English prose, the supreme master of the ornate, romantic style. Never was there a writer better able to reveal the infinite possibilities of suggestion latent in language; to divine also the inseparable affinities of nouns and adjectives. As for the spell of his inversions and mellifluous cadences it is a spell as subtle, and as intricate in its effect on the ear as the spell of music. I for one prefer a simpler and less laboured prose, for instance the untroubled and easy mastery of Lamb. But there is a witchery about the style of Pater — an indescribable magic. It is so full of languorous and monotonous fascination that it is like the charm of some tropical old-world garden steeped in moonlight, where one would linger many dreamful hours, breathing the drowsy odour of strange plants, lulled by the falling of silver spray in a marble fountain. With Pater there was an ever-recurrent desire to produce pre-arranged sensations. He lived by preference in the remote past, in the blithe world of ancient Hellas or in the Middle Age of Europe just at the dawning of the modern spirit. The word impressionism never occurs in his books,

and he never attempted to keep in touch with the radical innovations of his time. Nevertheless he was thoroughly modern in temperament; and in his art, seeking alike the satisfaction of his curiosity and of his desire for beauty, and striving to express complexities of mood through unities of effect, he was in the strictest sense of the word an impressionist, in fact the one self-conscious and self-consecrated prophet of impressionism.

THE SPELL OF THE EAST

We all have known people of taste, of temperament, perhaps even of talent, "artistic people" we call them, who somehow seem a little "distrait" about their pleasures, a little panic-stricken about their lives, looking around them almost wildly as if they were conscious of losing their way, with the night closing in around them. Eager for experience, avid of beauty and its expression, yet they seem bewildered. We wish we could do something before it is too late to help them find their way out of the luxuriant jungle of life's conflicting purposes. Such people sometimes glimpse the way from afar off but struggle towards it in vain, never seeming to get much nearer, baffled ever by distance and doubt and distracting circumstance. Some find it when the day is spent. A few are led, by accident, by grace of what you will, through the maze of their own mistakes, to the path they were meant to travel.

There are many instances of artists who have found in the Orient their inspiration — who in following the weirdly beckoning spirit of the East have obtained the release of baffled powers which else had never won fulfilment. Edward Fitzgerald, grim, indolent old scholar and country gentleman, had few interests in life and therefore wrote half-heartedly until one day he saw in the Bodleian Library that which was to emancipate his spirit — a Persian manuscript — purple ink powdered with gold, the original text of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam. All his world-weariness vanished and his indolence changed to feverish energy. To-day Fitzgerald is an English classic because he once enjoyed the richness of a crinkly Persian parchment and was moved to make a garden of Persian quatrains grow in the soil of Anglo-Saxon words. Such an art implies an attitude. As Stevenson recognized, "Romanticism is consciousness of the background." It was the taste for sumptuous backgrounds that sent the painters Delacroix, Decamps and Fromentin to the Orient. To my mind it is only Decamps who had the Orient in his own soul and was able therefore to bring it back with him on canvas. Whenever I am in Paris I go to the collection Moreau Nelaton to see Decamps' "Arab Army" enveloped in sunset mist. Dimly, in the golden distance, may be seen chariots and marching men, but the substance of it all is expressed in the splendour of one turbaned horseman darkly

silhouetted against a sky of storm-swept scarlet and gold.

It was Decamps who first revealed to the West how a Western heart can feel about Eastern colour. To-day we are passing through an Oriental phase of dancing, of dress, of decoration. Some of the greatest living painters, notably Albert Besnard, have responded to the influence. The stage pictures of Léon Bakst: with what wizardry of colour he tells all we need to know of Cleopatra's Egypt and fabled Bagdad! To appreciate Bakst one must see his ensemble — one must share his delight in the heights and depths of the stage, the greatly daring lights and colours and costumes. And yet the mere cartoons for opera and ballet have almost as much intrinsic merit as the glowing Persian miniatures which are growing so popular. What a rich humour, too, in the Bakst drawings! I recall one Mameluke most delectable in his fierceness of visage. Scarcely less appealing both to the general public and to those who know why art is art, are the colour-books of Edmond Dulac. His colors he has found in ancient potteries and jewels. Such an art obviously implies an attitude, but most assuredly the attitude does not imply the art. Many are called to express the glamour of the Orient but few are chosen. Dulac's pictures for the Arabian Nights fairly reverberate with fantastic laughter, and this is also true of the book decorated by our own Maxfield Parrish. One does not have to be a

child to enjoy such horrific allurements. The decorative imagination of these rare artists sends us all back to the pungent feast of fables with renewed relish. Something of this luxury of mood W. R. Benét has expressed in a metrical appreciation of the fair, resourceful Morgiana dancing wildly to the impending doom of her master's enemy, the last of the forty thieves.

Scarves about my head — so!
Silver girdle flash — ho!
Round again again we go,
Round again again we go.
Chalk upon the panel there,
Oil upon the pave there,
A guest ho! A guest ho!
A sweet guest — ho!

Poniard at my breast so!
Poniard at thy breast ho!
Round again again we go,
Round again again we go.
Here's a dagger's smart should be
Salt for your villany.
A guest ho! a guest ho!
A dead guest ho!

By way of this impressionistic verse I may retrace my steps to my subject "Impressionism in Prose." Of the many distinguished writers of our own tongue who responded to Oriental inspiration — such men as Edwin Arnold, Richard Burton, Bayard Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, the

only conscious impressionist of them all is Kipling. He introduced to literature British India; a land where old gods make way for modern garrisons, where soldiers and civilians serve their time on the outposts of the world. Atmosphere is one of the distinctive features of Kipling's impressionism. From a lofty minaret we look down on the moonlit "City of Dreadful Night" — the naked corpse-like bodies huddled in the shadows of the moon or exposed beneath its staring, blazing eye, the long road laid across the scorching land "like a bar of burnished steel;" the silver light splashed across the house-tops where men, women and children kept sighing in their restlessness. But it is not alone by description that he can create in our minds the sense of weather. He can affect us with it by slipping hints into his dialogue. Never was there such stifling, sickening heat in the pages of a book as in that intolerably pathetic story "At the End of the Passage." It is a superb bit of literary impressionism.

However, Kipling has written also of the sea and the supernatural, of English public school and country-house life. The most striking case of *complete* absorption of the Oriental genius by a Western artist is the strange case of Lafcadio Hearn. Hearn was a morbid, unpleasant fellow before he became a permanent resident of Japan. He hated everything others liked and went restlessly about the world in quest of new sensations and intellectual excitements to satisfy a craving he

scarcely understood. In fact he was well on his way towards becoming an English version of Theophile Gautier whose stories he translated, or perhaps another Baudelaire. In other words he was one of the kind who scorn the brave simplicities, preferring man's tricks of artifice to Nature's open bounties, giving free rein to the capricious devices of a jaded and unhealthy imagination. Suddenly in a book by Percival Lowell a spirit finger pointed to the East. In the Land of the Rising Sun, of old time, a land of ghosts and flowers, the god he desired to worship awaited him in an airy temple. He went within the dragon-swarming portals and offered sacrifice at the Buddhist shrine. The old order even then was changing, but enough of that archaic civilization remained to hold him spell-bound with delight and wonder. Here were new sensations a-plenty. Here was a supreme opportunity for the art of a master to evoke the body and mind, to express the heart and soul of old Japan, in order to interpret this mysterious prehistoric civilization to the Western world of totally alien sensibilities and perceptions. For this purpose surely Lafcadio Hearn was born, with his craving for the exotic and the unearthly, with his sensibilities as tremulously emotional as a child's, with his matured mastery of the subtleties of percept and concept, and the delicacies of language and the arts.

Of all the strange charms that stirred his spirit as he conducted his ecstatic researches into the

lives and legends of the Japanese, the one which cast the most potent spell over him was the idea of Karma, or the transmigration of souls. He even essayed to reconcile this Eastern doctrine to the Evolution of the West. But I am inclined to feel that his Buddhism need not be taken any more seriously than his professed devotion to Darwin and Spencer. Essentially this man was neither a philosopher nor a scientist, but a poet and an artist. In Japan he found a civilization older and more bizarre, hence to him more appealing, than the long vanished civilization of ancient Greece. He entered into this incredible world exulting in its strangeness and charm. The simplest revelations of Japanese character, the most casual corners of Japanese scenery, the most trifling scraps of Japanese folk-lore, filled him with æsthetic pleasure, with the new sensations and intellectual excitements which amid all the complexities of Europe and America he could not find. And yet so perfect was his art and so genuine his inspiration that the filmy cobwebs of ghostly legend and the tiny dewdrops of poetic fancy which he found sparkling on the surface of common life were transmuted into pearls through the sympathy and insight of his translations. Here is a poem on the firefly which so deeply appeals to the Japanese æsthetic sense:

> "Because it is speechless though burning with desire
> the firefly is more worthy of our pity than insects
> that cry out."

And here is another — a veritable epigram:

> "Would that I might always keep my butterfly-pursuing heart."

We do not think of the girl who composed the verse but of the man who translated it. How pathetic that poor Hearn, he of the eccentric and irregular life, should have a "butterfly-pursuing heart." Yet that line expresses him and his life-work. He was always seeking the beauty of little things, the beauty that lingers but for a moment, delicate in colour, fugitive of wing. It was the impressionism ingrained in the Japanese, both in the outward appearance and in the inward significance of their life and art — that brought out the impressionism of his own nature.

All of Hearn that really matters — Hearn the Mystic and Hearn the Impressionist, may be found in one precious rhapsody entitled "Horai." This is not as truly the Chinese conception of heaven as the Japanese heaven on earth of his own unattainable ideal. The ethnologist was not so much concerned with facts about the old Japan of cruel feudal wars, as was the artist with his luminous dreams of a spirit-world too beautiful to be true. Like Leonardo he burned to communicate the incommunicable, and to formulate the intangible. Only a few years ago I was sailing on the pale waters of the Inland Sea. It was a pearly evening. A veil of opalescent air enfolded me. The distant hills were violet, the

clouds were rose in the misty sunlight. For a few enchanted moments I could almost see Hearn's vision of a mortal fairy-land, suspended between earth and heaven.

"Blue vision of depth lost in height, sea and sky interblending. . . . one azure enormity. But far away in the midway blue hangs a faint, faint vision of palace towers, with high roofs curved like moons, shadowing of a splendour strange and old, illumined by a sunshine soft as memory. These are the glimmering portals of Horai the blest. In Horai the flowers never fade, and the fruits never fail, and the magical grass is watered by a fairy water of which a single drink confers perpetual youth. But the most wonderful thing of all is the atmosphere. The sunshine is whiter than any other sunshine, a milky white that never dazzles. The atmosphere is not of our period. It is enormously old, and it is made not of air but of ghosts, blended into one immense translucency. Whatever mortal man inhales that atmosphere he takes into his blood the thrilling of these spirits, and they change the senses within him, so that he can see only as they used to see, and think as they used to think, and feel as they used to feel. Soft as sleep are these changes of sense. In Horai the hearts of the people never grow old. The speech of the women is like bird song because the hearts of them are light as the souls of birds; and the swaying of the sleeves of the maidens at play seems a flutter of wide, soft

wings. Nothing is hidden but grief, because there is no reason for shame, and by night as by day all doors are unbarred, because there is no reason for fear. And because the people, though mortal, are fairies, all things are small, and quaint and queer. Evil winds from the West are blowing over Horai, and the magical atmosphere is shrinking before them. It lingers now only on the long bright banks of clouds, like those in the Japanese landscapes. Under these elfish vapours you may still see Horai, but not elsewhere. Remember it is only Shinkiro, which signifies mirage — the Vision of the Intangible. And now the vision is fading, never again to appear, save in pictures and poems and dreams."

JOHN GALSWORTHY

The novels of George Meredith afford an interesting example of impressionistic temperament and genius richly lavished on a medium which is the very opposite of impressionism. No novelist has ever revealed a mind quite so amazingly responsive to the inner life of moods and sensations, quite so fond of *effects*, serio-comic and fantastic. One treasures his books for the rich passages, the choice pages of clever mimicry, fanciful day-dreaming, brilliant word-painting. If Meredith had taken the prose sketch or personal essay as the medium for his genius he would have been the greatest of all literary impressionists. But it is the proper purpose of the novel

to see life as it is — a strange conglomeration of conflicting impressions. To preserve unity of effect in a novel, as Hawthorne preserved it in the "Scarlet Letter," is to write a lyric novel and sacrifice much that properly belongs to fiction. Before the publication of "The Dark Flower" John Galsworthy had been like George Meredith, not so truly a novelist in spite of his impressionistic point of view as an exceptional novelist because of it. To appreciate, however, his seeking for curiosities of character and experience, his sensitiveness to fine moments and his mastery of single effects, one had to put aside the big canvases, the novels and plays, and enjoy the sketches one by one.

The literary sketch may be dramatic, lyric, realistic or fantastic. It may be the record of something sharply seen or vividly imagined. In either case all that was elusive in an observation or evanescent in an emotion has been given permanence. In Galsworthy's "A Motley" we pass from one phase of life to another, from one human type to its extreme opposite. The tone of this book, as of its more didactic predecessor "A Commentary," is distinctly gloomy. Our world is evidently a cruel world, semi-barbarous, in spite of that veneer of civilization, which in its ironical power to inflict suffering is perhaps its most cruel attribute. The spectator is not content to look on the sunny side of things as did Browning and Meredith. He hunts for tragedy

and he finds it. He finds it in the wounded look and dusty yellow skin of a German convict who is serving life imprisonment in solitary confinement, who, in the desolation of his cell, paints a haunting picture of all the sunshine and colour and joy that his starved soul has (in some way) created out of its tortured consciousness. He finds it in a little woman of the slums, who, by her gallant toil, supports her brute of a husband and her litter of grown boys, who creeps into bed at night wondering whether when her man at last comes home he will lash her with words and blows or leer upon her lustfully. But sometimes the world seems not so bad, simply sad without definite reason. We turn a page and from an illustration of a grim truth related with the power of a Zola we now enjoy a delicate Meredithian description of an emotional experience, related for no other purpose than the pleasure of its subtlety; the memory, in more than one instance, of a time when, to the sensitive mind, the visible world seemed to symbolize sentiments vague yet vital. In the sketch entitled "A Parting" the autumn sunlight lingers wearily over Kensington Gardens, a few golden leaves clinging to the trees and on the ground the pattering swirl of a dog's feet in the midst of leaf-mortality. The air is heavy with the scent of smoke and of dry, dusty grass, and in the heart there is the ache of nameless fear, of beauty that perishes. This is not a setting for a story. The setting *is* the story. We are simply

asked to stand with Mr. Galsworthy apart to observe and overhear a man and a woman who seem to have kept a tryst for the last time, who cling together for a few passionate moments drinking bitterness from each other's loving eyes, and then, for some sad sufficient reason of their own, part for always. It is only a suggestion that the mind may follow where it wills, only a fragment, fugitive and tantalizing. But for all the wealth and the wisdom of the world, close your eyes a moment and think, what is the sum of your own experience? Only a portentous suggestion, only a fragment of the universal mystery, only a vivid sketch.

As I have already written, conscious, deliberate impressionism in prose is a modern product. It came with art for art's sake and we have Walter Pater to thank for it. Without Pater's influence we might never have been able to appreciate the fact that there is in England to-day the best art critic English literature has produced, Arthur Symons, a writer whose art it is that he can estimate in crystal phrases just what artistic values really are, who can interpret an artist in terms of his innermost intention and facilitate interpretation by creating a criticism of identical quality with the work criticised. Just as the pathfinding Pater by revealing the luxury of clear thinking made possible the criticisms of the luxurious Arthur Symons, so the pathfinding Meredith by revealing the intensity of per-

sonal impressionism made it possible for the intense Galsworthy to create impressionistic sketches, or definite personal ways of saying definite personal things. In the course of our supersensitive twentieth-century pruning away of everything inessential we have lost much that was true and fine. Some writers, of course, are so stung with the rage for technical perfection that they have become careless whether their hearts are where they should be, in their subjects rather than in their style. This, however, is not true of Galsworthy, who is on the contrary a reformer, always collecting evidence, always seeming about to begin a vigorous personal arraignment. In his earlier novels we felt that his canvases were too big, that parts were better than the whole, that the man was missing the unity which he so desired. At last he did a daring thing. He took one theme which he might have done in twenty pages, wrote it novel-fashion and preserved the idea intact so that upon closing the book we carry away one and only one impression. Of course I refer to "The Dark Flower," a genuine lyric novel. Is such a thing altogether legitimate? Perhaps not. Is it safe from monotony? Ah, that is the real danger.

The burning and the yearning for love, that is the theme of "The Dark Flower," and now that sex has been given this one profoundly thoughtful discussion it would be well if lesser authors would despair of competition and change the subject,

for, after all, there are other things in life. However one would scarcely think so from a reading of "The Dark Flower."

It is a book for those who have had their hour of stormful love; the kind that transfigures earth and sky, that becomes "a part forever of the stillness and passion of a summer night;" the kind that closes its eyes to shut out the sight of the beloved only to make the blessed vision ten times more visible; the kind that longs for the steadfast peace of the stars yet wonders whether there are not souls in trees; the kind that challenges gods to fight and yields to circumstance at the crisis. It is such stormful love, this "love life of a man." Some think the intensity has been sustained too long, that even violins must change their tone or they become intolerable violins. But if "The Dark Flower" suffers from its lyric lengthiness, yet it must be acknowledged that this is rather because of our too susceptible sensibilities than because of any tendency on the author's part to fall below the lyric level. Galsworthy's insight into the hearts of boys and girls, of men and women, is something very precious because it is so full of compassionate understanding, and of exultation, in spite of everything, for the loveliness of love. And the language is marvellously fine. Abrupt quotation can give no adequate conception of the haunting, magic beauty with which scenes are described and emotions expressed.

Here in a sentence is the quality of sunshine in a mountain valley of the Tyrol. — "Even the feel of the air was new, that delicious crisp burning warmth that lay so lightly on the surface of frozen stillness, the special sweetness too of places at the foot of mountains — scent of pine gum, burning larchwood and all the meadow flowers and grasses." There is much shrewd observation of character. How well we know the old Colonel. "His face had the candour of one who has never known how to seek adventures of the mind but always sought adventures of the body." But here is something in the dominant strain: "Climbing up above the road he lay down. If only she were there beside him. The fragrance of the earth not yet chilled crept up to his face and for just a moment it seemed to him that she did come. If he could only keep her there forever in that embrace that was no embrace, that ghostly rapture. . . . Then she was gone. His hands touched nothing but crumpled pine dust. He conjured up her face making certain of it. The whole flying loveliness of her. Then he leaped down to the road and ran. One couldn't walk feeling this miracle."

"The Dark Flower" is the last word in impressionistic prose, a lyric that is to all appearances a novel, a novel that is as direct and personal as a lyric.

IX

IMPRESSIONISM IN POETRY

POETRY began with song which was then the mere crude expression of physical impulse. Gradually the mind developed and its ideas soon flowered into literature. Artificial at first, poets learned at last to speak from their own experience. Poetry grew fairer and stronger as time went on, until in its happiest hours, in ages flushed with thrilling inspiration, it became the inevitable expression of man's complex inner life, as Mathew Arnold expressed it "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." Music is the model for all those arts which appeal to the emotions not through the reasoning intelligence but directly through the senses, since in its perfect union of form and substance it realizes their ideal. Literature, however, is the peer of all the arts, because its dominion extends not only over the five kingdoms of sense but also over the vast inexhaustible continent of human thought.

Of late realism has succeeded romance, while classification and criticism almost overwhelm artistic creation. The craftsman and the dilettante luxuriate in expressing states of body and moods of mind, and the poet, the poet of an age

of prose, too often abandons the still unexhausted continent of thought to return to the five kingdoms of sense, there to dispute the sway of sculpture, painting and music. An age of science is inevitably aggressive in its iconoclasm, in its intolerance of artistic conventions supposedly outworn. For better or worse old forms and old ideas are irreverently cast aside, and new styles cleverly adapted to new subjects proudly introduced. Modern poetry, therefore, preferably lyric in form, must now-a-days be spontaneous and original. It may be slight but the form must be in perfect harmony with the subject. Finally it must be saturated with that radical something which we call impressionism.

It is true that we have come to associate impressionism with a certain school of modern painting, a school far famed for the rapid noting of elusive appearance as opposed to the accurate imitation of objects as they really are. But at last the word should be given its true meaning, and made definitely descriptive of the fundamental principle of all the representative arts. However, there are differences. To say of a painting that it is impressionistic is the same thing as to say of a man that he is manly. In other words, both have successfully fulfilled their intended function. Obviously, a vast amount of the world's greatest poetry could not, even under the most elastic stretching of the term, be called impressionistic. If the word then is to be borrowed from the repre-

sentative arts for application to poetry, it can only be used in connexion with such poetry as presents single impressions through definite forms, even as sculpture and painting. It is peculiarly attractive to modern æsthetic criticism to criticise one art in terms of another. Now if this criticism is indicative of the work criticised, that is, if a painter has indeed consciously attempted to suggest sound and a musician to suggest colour, then these artists have indulged their restless imagination and adventurous skill to such excess as to be abnormally impressionistic, since they have broken down the barrier between their arts and taken to imitating each other. Such is the latest phase in painting and music, of Cubism on the one hand and of Strauss on the other. In each case virtuosity has been carried to extravagant triumph and the end is not yet. Meanwhile a contagious fever has spread through modern poetry, urging it out of its infinite capacity to attempt the sensuous and subtly suggestive work of the other arts, and it is to this phase of poetry in its manifold variations that the adjective impressionistic may be properly applied.

Impressionism in poetry then implies conscious effort, deliberate craft and such temperament as is needed not only for talented production but for successful exhibition of talent. Roughly speaking there are in the repertoire of the metrical impressionists two general types of performance, the display of *old effects* and of *new sensations*.

Both styles are planned and executed in the same way, and the quickening impulse that prompts their production will be found strangely similar. Consider for instance the verse of the ultra modern poet Paul Verlaine. "It rains in my heart," he once sang, and from certain moods of our own we think that we understand. That hint at the modern ennui is an instance of subtly suggestive sensation, sensation of course that is not really new, but newly comprehended and expressed in our analytical age. Verlaine's old effects were often in imitation of the dainty, exquisite style and bitter-sweet spirit of Watteau's paintings. So harmoniously do these old effects blend with the new sensations that it becomes at once apparent how nearly akin are the two types of impressionistic performance. But there is an even better example of their mingling than the verse of Verlaine. I refer to the English painter-poets who delighted in the title pre-Raphaelite. In revulsion of feeling at the sacrifice of sentiment naturalists were making in their pursuit of truth, quite contemptuous of everything new and quite foolishly fond of everything old, these men resolved to revive in Victorian England that spirit of æsthetic exaltation and of exuberant stained-glass colour and emotion which had characterized the earlier days of the Italian Renaissance. In the work of Burne-Jones, Rossetti and William Morris the tingling nerves of shrill modernity clashed with the pristine simplicity which they

sought, and the blend of middle-age method with the obviously modern motive produced an impressionistic art that is as artificial as it is unique.

If the impressionistic versifiers of to-day wish to trace their descent from artistic forefathers of the great romantic school in England let them name Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Such an ancestry might indeed sober and uplift their conception of art and to such an ancestry they have a reasonable claim. To the forthright honesty of Burns, Wordsworth added sometimes a subtlety of emotion. This subtlety was the special province, however, of Coleridge, whose "Ancient Mariner" is full of inspiration in its choice of adjectives and adverbs to express imagined states of body and mind. As for that strange remembrance of a dream, that glorious fragment "Kubla Khan," it is the outpouring of pure sensation for what it is worth, glamorous with colour and scent and sound, signifying nothing. Not even in Swinburne is there a better instance of that luxury of literary impressionism, sound for sound's sake. Tennyson and Browning in a sense represent a consummation of English poetry. Tennyson, responsive like Keats to classic and Gothic inspiration, was also receptive to modern influence in the air he breathed. But if, in a few sensitive lyrics, he accepted impressionism along with other ideas, Browning not only accepted it but enlarged its scope with precious innovations. Tennyson completed and perfected

the poetic motives of his predecessors. Browning, vividly original and independent, chose rather to break ground in untried fields. His great achievement was to incorporate psychology in poetic art, and this science he employed for analyzing thoughts and moods or for painting, through speeches from their own mouths, marvellous portraits of men and women. His impressionism, however, was not always psychological, for such a lyric as "Meeting at Night" appeals directly to the senses. Picture painting in poems is an attractive art. Do you know the "Silhouettes" of Arthur Symons? They come about as close to the æsthetic arrangements of Whistler as it is possible to come in a different art. Here, for instance, is a fresh little pastel done in Whistler's own colours. Every word counts like the brushstrokes of the master.

"The sea lies quieted beneath
The after-sunset flush,
That leaves upon the heaped gray clouds
The grape's faint purple blush.

Pale from a little space in Heaven
Of purest ivory,
A sickle moon and one gold star
Look down upon the sea."

And here again is a fine bit of painting. The tone values are as subtle as in Whistler, and the emotional suggestion only a little more obvious.

"The twilight droops across the day,
I watch her portrait on the wall
Palely recede into the gray
That palely comes to cover all.

The sad spring twilight, dull, forlorn,
The menace of a sultry night,
Yet in her face more fresh than morn
A sweet suspension of delight."

This is a vast improvement upon the pictorial quality of Rossetti's verse, for, whereas we feel that Rossetti's poems *should* have been pictures, we promptly admit that Symons' "Silhouettes" *are* pictures, and very clever ones at that.

Someone acutely observed that "to make familiar" things seem strange and strange things seem familiar is the unconscious purpose of modern poetry. We shall see how true that is now that we come to glance over various creations of the impressionistic muse, striving as she always does to express those elusive yet oft recurring phenomena apprehended within our brains or in the world around us. Symbolical impressionism is the name best applied to that verse, French in origin, which deals with joys that are only masquerade, laughter that mocks the heart and leaves it cold. Such art is complete in the following poem translated from Verlaine by Gertrude Hall. It symbolizes the emptiness of this world's fierce delights.

"Your soul is as a moon-lit landscape fair,
Peopled with maskers, delicate and dim,
That play on lutes, and dance, and have an air
Of being sad, in their fantastic trim;

The while they celebrate, in minor strain,
Triumphant love — effective enterprise.
They have an air knowing all is vain,
As through the quiet moonlight their songs rise.

The melancholy moonlight, sweet and lone,
That makes to dream the birds upon the tree
And, in their polished basins of white stone,
The fountains tall to sob with ecstasy."

W. B. Yeats is the leader of a school of Irish poets whose purpose has been to render in absolutely original music the quintessence of the ancient mystical Celtic spirit. There are few lyrics in the language so lovely as this, in spite of the fact that it is sweet sound only.

"I will arise and go now
And go to Innisfrae,
And a lake island build there
Of clay and wattles made.
Nine bean rows shall I have there,
A hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there
For peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning
To where the cricket sings;

There midnight's a glimmer,
And noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now,
For always night and day
I hear lake water lapping
With low sounds by the shore:
While I stand on the roadway,
Or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core."

Then there is the psychological lyric, the expression of our most complicated moments. Have you ever known this feeling of Rossetti's? If you have, you must have caught yourself brooding upon the Oriental belief in pre-existence.

"I have been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell.
I know the grass beyond the door —
The sweet, keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

You have been mine before,
How long ago I may not know,
But just when at that swallow's soar
Your neck turned so —
A veil did fall — I knew it all of yore."

The will-o'-the-wisp elusiveness of a mood was chased by our precious poet Aldrich and captured in the last line — thus:

"A blight — a gloom — I know not what has crept across
my gladness.
A vague, remote ancestral touch of sorrow or of sadness,
A fear that is not fear — a pain, that has not pain's insistence —
A sense of longing, or of loss, in some foregone existence.
A subtle hurt that never pen has writ nor tongue has spoken,
Such hurt perchance as nature feels when a blossomed bough
is broken.

With its haunting Celtic melody and its inspired expression of a temperamental excitement in a Celtic maiden's heart, there is much delicate art expended upon this Irish Peasant Song by Louise Imogen Guiney.

"I try to knead and spin but my life is low the while.
Oh I long to be alone and walk abroad a mile,
Yet if I walk alone and think of naught at all
Why from me that's young should the wild tears fall?

The shower-sodden earth — the earth-coloured streams
They breathe on me awake and moan to me in dreams,
And the ivy that fondles the broke castle wall
It pulls upon my heart till the wild tears fall.

The cabin door looks down a furze-lighted hill.
As far as Leighlin Cross the fields are green and still.
But once I hear a blackbird in Leighlin hedges call,
The foolishness is on me, and the wild tears fall!"

Then there is the poetry that is pathological, if such a thing is possible — the poetry of the nervous system and its harassing sensations.

"At the barren heart of midnight —
Dripping — dropping in a rhythm
Rough, unequal, half-melodious —
I can hear a cistern leaking.

Like the buzzing of an insect
Still, irrational, persistent,
I must listen, listen, listen,
In a passion of attention —

'Till it taps upon my heart strings,
And my very life goes dripping —
Dropping, dripping, drip-drip-dropping,
With the drip-drop of the cistern."

Let us trust that the pursuit of physical sensation can go no farther.

I have failed in this essay if I have not made it clear that impressionism, which is the essential function of the representative arts, is only one of the lesser functions of the supreme art of poety. I have attempted to show that whereas great poets like Browning have been impressionistic on occasion, the craftsmen of to-day have regarded the making of effects as an end in itself, lavishing upon it a greater technical brilliancy than their illustrious predecessors ever possessed. If such dilettantism could work any harm to the progress of poetry it would be the duty of the critic to condemn it, but such a thought cannot be seriously considered. Soon there will dawn another golden day for poetry, and then, with all

the dauntless courage and subtle skill acquired during the present age at their command, poets will climb to heights perhaps as yet unconquered. Meanwhile much may be said for the worth of the work that is going on, and something even for its spiritual significance. Rossetti felicitously defined the sonnet as a "moment's monument," but I think that this phrase may be more accurately ascribed to all arts that we can call impressionistic. Poets have learned, perhaps from landscape painters, that one must be alert to catch the ever changing smiles and frowns upon the face of nature. The epic majesties, the eternal verities, these things have been celebrated in song centuries ago, in days of deeper faith and farther vision. Enough for the modern artist to carve with curious skill a little coin of verse, finding solace in the thought that the coin outlasts Tiberius.

STEVENSON AND HENLEY

Kindred spirits in the art of living — they were made for each other — were Stevenson and Henley. I like to think of that first meeting in the dingy Edinburgh Infirmary where Henley lay convalescent; how to the sick Titan helpless in his maimed strength yet dauntless of spirit and receptive of mind the fragile Faun appeared, so irresistible in his charm, so sprightly in his humour, with his rare and exquisite culture and his almost fantastic grace. What a feast for the

gods that first talk must have been, Leslie Stephen thrown in for good measure! Then and there perhaps they discovered their kindred tastes; and of poetry and romance, music and paintings, memories of land and sea, nonsense, excitement and spiritual conflict who could speak with a heartier relish and a more appreciative gusto than these two charming fellows? The joy of living was the sustaining inspiration of both men. Life was to them a "dream worth dreaming" — a vividly romantic adventure through an enchanted forest in which griefs and terrors were dragons to be dealt with in the dark. To fortunate mortals blessed with health and prosperous abundance, it is easy enough to be happy. But how much deeper a joy it is to love life in spite of adversity and illness, to make artistic capital out of tragic and even sordid experience, while ghostly Death lurks in the wings, a worthy enemy in ambuscade. So life was a prize to be gallantly hazarded. It was good to be merry in youth, to be young in the spring, vagabonds and knights-errant on the highways and byways. It was "better far to be a fool than to be dead — but a thousand times better dead than a coward." For death was the tremendous experience.

But the likeness between Stevenson and Henley does not cease with their congenial tastes and their kindred philosophy. As artists their aims and methods were often identical and their songs generally in the same key. In Stevenson's

spirited lyric "Tropic Rain" we recall at once Henley's imaginative realism and his resonant diction.

"As the single pang of the blow — when the metal is mingled well
Rings and lives and resounds in all the bounds of the bell,
So the thunder above spake with a single tongue,
So in the heart of the mountains — the sound of it rumbled and clung.
Sudden the thunder was drowned — quenched was the levin light,
And the angel spirit of rain laughed out loud in the night,
Loud as the maddened river raves in the cloven glen.
Angel of rain! How you laughed and leaped on the roofs of men!"

Surely Henley would have been equally responsive to the thrill of that storm and would have expressed it in the same way. The reverse is true. Stevenson's spirit animated, and his art helped to perfect, many of Henley's best lyrics. The songs of both men deserve to endure as long as the language and yet they do not represent their highest achievements. Stevenson, I think, will live longest as the master of a well nigh perfect prose — in his gripping short stories, his ever-delicious "Treasure Island" and, best of all, his genial and exquisite essays. As for Henley — the "London Voluntaries" with their wholly unprecedented power of subject and style, seem to me to hold out his best chance of immortality.

His descriptions of London days and nights

under the varying aspects of the hours and seasons are in each case suffused with the poet's moods. In one picture "Saint Margaret's bells sing in the storied air," "filling the sobered streets with Sabbath peace." In another, London is "languid with midsummer sorcery." The homes are shut, and by night the streets are "still and spectral avenues of sleep." Then again it is October at the "golden end of afternoon." Trafalgar Square "shimmers in mellow haze." "Even the blind man pottering on the curb among his trinkets and his ostrich feathers shares in the universal alms of light." The remaining pictures depict London cowering under "the wind-fiend out of the poisonous east" and in the "delirious ecstasy of spring." The poetry of cities was at last discovered and for all time incorporated into art.

In the most dissimilar mediums of expression — the arts of Stevenson and Henley are remarkably akin. Both were stylists, unfailing in their grasp of the inevitable adjective, the predestined phrase, the delicately modulated sound and articulated sense. Both were radical naturalists, for Stevenson's mediæval cities and South Sea islands were as vividly realized as Henley's contemporary London. The difference was that Henley flashed upon our minds the romantic essence of the sights we see by day, whereas Stevenson gave form to the realistic substance of the dreams we see by night. Finally both were impressionists — hand-

ling their words as a painter handles pigments, always condensing thoughts and selecting images for the sake of creating one definite impression.

I have said that the joy of living was the motive force in the minds and hearts of both men. This is hardly true of the Henley of his later years. No poet was ever quite so unreservedly personal in his record of impressions gleaned from actual experience. During the greater part of his life, the storm and stress of his existence filled him with a grim joy — the very joy of fighting men in the reek and sweat of battle. Stevenson may have inspired him with this exalted vitality of thought and speech — for who does not know how throughout that race of his with death through the shadow of the valley — his spirits rose until he laughed and sang in the very face of his relentless pursuer. But Stevenson laughed and sang to the end because he was actually happy, happy not alone for the thrill of the gallop and the danger of the race, but for the welcoming faces along the way, the beckoning hills, the smell of the sea, the "wide and starry sky." Life was to him so wonderful and beautiful and brief that he took no time to notice that it can also be plain and dull. He enjoyed his life for its own sake — rejoicing as Chesterton said of Scott in "the toughness of wood — the everlasting soapiness of soap." And the arts he so loved and so enriched were kept in their proper place — as the reflected images of nature.

Not so with Henley, for the conviction grows upon us as we read his verse that it is less for its own sake he loved life than because it afforded him such splendid material for artistic expression and depiction. The unique and once read never to be forgotten memories of his confinement "In Hospital" are instances of this employment of personal experience in the cause of art. The depression of arrival — the sickening excitement of waiting for the operation, the storming of the "thick sweet mystery of chloroform," the tortured dreamery of the long, unnatural days and nights, the familiar faces of nurses and doctors, the coming of spring through the open windows and finally the release into the dazzling healthy world — it is all very vivid and very true. But much of it is disagreeable and some of it is not poetry. Now Stevenson had many long illnesses — about which we are told nothing. He refused to see the medicine bottles, or record the pain. He closed his eyes and dreamed dreams and recalled happier days. Henley, the journalist-poet was intent always upon "copy" — intent always upon converting observation and experience into art for art's sake.

It is often written that Stevenson incarnated both in life and literature the spirit of youth. Such a thought is more picturesque than true. Rather was he one of those rare beings who can carry the dreams and thoughts of childhood and boyhood undimmed into the more encompassing concerns of maturity. If it is true that there

never was a more childish child and a more boyish boy than Stevenson, it is equally true that there never was a more manly man. And all the while (we feel it would have been the same had he been spared to old age), all the while he carried along with him the unforgotten child and boy. Just here we may observe how the impressionistic art of remembering and defining states of mind and physical sensations, the art he shared with his friend Henley, was directed by him in a very different direction from "In Hospital," and "London Voluntaries." In the "Child's Garden of Verses" he embarked upon a new, uncharted channel of art — the oft-unfathomed sea of the child's mental and emotional experience.

"How do you like to go up in a swing
Up in the air so blue?
Oh I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do.

Up in the air and over the wall
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the country side.

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roofs so brown,
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down."

And the ever delectable,

"In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle light,
In summer quite the other way
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree
And hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me on the street.

And does it not seem hard to you
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?"

It thrills me yet to remember how I loved a swing and how I resented going to bed by day! And Stevenson has made me not alone recall but actually renew the rapture and the resentment. To read the "Child's Garden of Verses" is to live one's infancy over again with the additional enchantment of distance and the subconscious realization of its beauty.

Then with "Treasure Island" we grow again into day-dreaming, sea-faring boyhood and associate once more with pirates and other desperate characters and enjoy more than ever we did the blood-curdling chorus.

"Sixteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum.
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum."

At last we enter again into our young manhood and the earth is as full of fascination and promise as the earth has a way of seeming when we are twenty-one. We go on vagabond journeys smiling we scarce know why. We sleep under the stars in rapt wonder and listen to rare talk of art and love. And it is all so ample and spontaneous and eloquent an existence that we almost forget it is the matchless prose of Stevenson's essays that is lifting us out of our dreary, undeveloped selves, to make us see and feel as never before — the charms of earth.

But the love of Stevenson is like the love of woman. It is difficult in such extremities of affection to be calm and judicial. When however we have hardened our hearts to the charm of him, and adjusted our critical spectacles, charm remains the chief asset both of the man and the artist. Great depths he did not fathom, because life in its entirety he would not face. If I consider his essays and lyrics the best part of his achievement it is because in these he revealed at least a little of his inner self, the sacred inner life which, for all his egoism, he would not distribute broadcast. The stories, vivid as they are by reason of the romancer's genius, are the reflex of his dreamy, whimsical half-hours, rather than of his serious convictions. Stevenson's best tales of adventure were either written like "Treasure Island" out of a smiling, make-believing mood to give pleasure to kindred spirits young and old, or else

like "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" they proceeded directly from the subconscious imagination of dreams. Sometimes the effects he created were grotesque and terrible, like the bogey dreams which gave them shape; then again they were made for laughter, or for that borderland of the mind between sleeping and waking. But whether he called back his unforgotten games and thoughts of childhood, or the phantoms of his sleep, as once upon a time he felt so we are made to feel, and for such art, whether realistic or romantic in substance, impressionism is the proper name.

We have noted the resemblances between Stevenson and Henley, their mutual responsiveness to congenial influences and their closely related synthesis of style. The chief difference was in how they chose to express fundamentally the same thoughts and emotions. To both men life was no less romantic than real, but Stevenson was for emphasizing the reality of the romance while Henley was always laying stress upon the romance of the realities. Stevenson's impressionism dealt by preference with distant memories and imaginative dreams; Henley's with familiar moods and unusual though oft-recurring sensations. There are lyrics of Henley's which startle us into realization that no flying moment is too brief for modern art to celebrate. I recall one "Echo" in which the poet, standing by an open window on a fresh spring morning — sniffs the

salt wind from the sea, and remarks out of the joy of his mood that "the sun seems glad to shine." At the same instant "an old cracked fiddle" sets up an infernal "grunting" and "buzzing" on the pavement below. And the air it is vulgarizing is one, we are told, made sweet by association. We are made to feel as we have all felt in forgotten moments of light-hearted leisure — the strange sensation of jangled love and laughter, the sublime and the ridiculous. There are other lyrics in which moods are so well remembered and the simple incidents associated therewith so hauntingly familiar, that the effect upon our minds is impressive out of all proportion to the seeming slightness of the verse. Here is a memory of a summer night:

"The skies are strown with stars,
The streets are fresh with dew.
A thin moon drifts to westward —
The night is hushed and cheerful —
My thought is quick with you.

Near windows gleam and laugh,
And far away a train
Clanks glowing through the stillness.
A great content's in all things —
And life is not in vain."

What a happy choice of adjectives and verbs! What a subtle power of suggesting more than is expressed! What a privilege to have our evanescent moods prolonged — to remember how you

felt yesterday among the evening shadows and I to-night under the stars!

THE LYRICS OF ROBERT BRIDGES

It is cause for astonishment that Robert Bridges should be Poet Laureate in an age marked by the hum of machines and the shrill contending voices of the crowd; an age when mighty problems are seething and mightier meanings evolving for us all in the transforming heat. For Robert Bridges is a cool, mellow scholar, who lives reflective days in a cool mellow university atmosphere where time is apt to linger by the way; who has written poems that remind us of old, old songs in the "Golden Treasury," who at first sight seems to belong to any age except our own. Because his poems are musical with a music we already know, most of his readers confidently assert that he is unoriginal and imitative, and because he tells in simple words of simple thoughts and feelings, avoiding the problems and the passions of life, that he is a minor poet, uninspired and uninspiring. Certainly it is cause for astonishment that he is Poet Laureate for an age in which he must always seem, rather like an amiable, distinguished, contemporary of one's grandfather.

His elevation to the eminence of a public functionary must be a matter for astonishment to Mr. Bridges himself. He is the poet for the few because he has never written to please the many,

nor has he made concessions to their understanding. Both at his worst and at his best his poems are personal, with a certain curiously impersonal ardour for beauty that is peculiarly his own. Both at his worst and at his best his poems give the impression of an artist who is very much engrossed with his art, quite obliviously thinking out loud, humming, reciting, practicing to himself and for himself. The bad poems are experimental thoughts and tunes, obviously laboured and unsuccessful, too private in their thwarted hopes to be subjected to public scrutiny. The good poems, on the contrary, no longer reveal the labours of the mind, only its satisfaction with its own art's concealment. The experimental thoughts and tunes have shaped and sung themselves from inward to outward perfection. That they seem, in spite of their abstract beauty, personal, and in spite of their subtle artistry, simple, that is the peculiar quality of Bridges' genius. For I so far disagree with the opinion that he is without inspiration, that I would say that inspiration is the one word to explain the happy accident of his rare expression. His range has been extremely narrow, his conception of his own powers singularly modest. He has always written only the sort of poetry he himself cares most to read, and loving the old poems best his mind has reverted by preference to the verse forms of the earlier centuries of English song. But this narrow range and old-time style do not

prove him uninspired and unoriginal, for in spite of his self-imposed limitations and his apparent imitations, he is the most inspired and original poet now living, the one poet who can write an old song in a new way, in such a way as to make us wonder why we think that the simplest truth is ever old, why we doubt that the simplest beauty is forever new.

Simplicity is really the charm of Robert Bridges' poetry and all the subtlety and skill that have gone to its making have not robbed it of this quality, because it is the very purpose of his art and the very essence of his purpose. Occasionally he is bookish. His preoccupation with classical studies spoils his moods. Archaisms and pedantic allusions shadow the transparency of his thoughts. But in the shorter poems, which alone will survive him, his words are the words of common speech and his thoughts our daily thoughts. What distinguishes him from other poets of the simpler feelings is his rare perception of the romance of familiarity, the subtlety of what we had always supposed was obvious, the novelty of what we had always thought old-fashioned. This profound truth he expresses through an impressionistic method, in which delicately intricate metres are made to seem inevitable and spontaneous. It is because this method is so new that Bridges belongs to the few instead of to the many. But it is for the many that he really writes, the many for whom

joys may pass unperceived but not in vain. He is the poet of contentment, of the quiet hours when love repays — the poet of joy. After all his art is not song for song's sake, but for the joy that makes the heart to sing.

He is a lover of nature — not as romantic background, nor as subject matter for ethical or metaphysical speculations, but simply because it is good to be out of doors. One has spent happy hours in the woods and on the river. Let us not forget them. One thinks of him on summer afternoons when the sun is low and minster bells pervade the stillness, or in the twilight when a brightening moon pervades the dark. When winter shuts the door the scholar loves his own fireside.

"Then oft I turn the page
In which our country's name,
Spoiling the Greek of fame,
Shall sound in every age
Or some Terentian play
Renew, whose excellent
Adjusted folds betray
How once Menander went."

The Spring however stirs him from his studies, calming his spirit while quickening his pulses.

"Riding a-down the country lanes
One day in Spring,
Heavy at heart with all the pains
Of man's imagining.

The mist was not yet melted quite
Into the sky.
The small round sun was dazzling white
The merry larks sang high.

The stillness of the lenten air
Called into sound
The motions of all life that were
In field or farm around.

Riding a-down the country lanes,
The larks sang high.
O heart! For all thy griefs and pains
Thou shalt be loath to die."

The perfume of flowers and their delicacies of form and tint re-awaken in him the desire for expression — the desire to evoke in words something of this flowerlike loveliness — even in the sound of flowered names woven in garlands of verse.

"Thick on the woodland floor
Gay company shall be,
Primrose and hyacinth
And frail anemone.

Perennial strawberry bloom
Woodsorrel's pencilled veil,
Dishevell'd willow weed
And orchis purple and pale."

Music in its perfect union of spirit and sense, of form and feeling, is his ideal of expression, the

art his own verse most nearly approaches, if indeed it is not even more truly like that re-adjustment of emotion after the song is still. To Music he gives the credit that "the rapture of woodland spring is stayed in its flying." It is the fugitive in life that charms him, not the great deeds nor yet the passionate thrills, but the little secret joys and fears, vague desires and fond regrets, and the sharp though unembittered sense of beauty passing — passing.

"I have loved airs that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it,
Notes that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the heart's desire
Then die and are no where
My song be like an air."

Thus, even as in music's spell, Bridges distills the essence of unbodied emotions.

But if nature means anything — if music has anything to say — it is love. Bridges is the poet, not of love's feverish unrest, its hunger and thirst, its torment and bitterness, nor yet of its triumphant outcries, but of its deepest, stillest ecstasies, its continuance of restful joy, when as Arthur Symons described it "rapture is no longer astonished at itself." Of the love lyrics particularly it is true that they are happy thoughts overheard, happy, uneventful moments made

eternal. What could be more childlike in its holiday joyousness, its buoyant, unthinking, unabashed happy-heartedness than this little song:

"When June is come then all the day
I'll sit with my love in the scented hay,
And watch the sunshot palaces high
That the white clouds build in the breezy sky.

She singeth and I do make her a song
And read sweet poems the whole day long,
Unseen as we lie in our haybuilt home;
O life is delight — when June is come."

It seems too easy! And yet it is so perfect!

Such is the all-inclusiveness of love that every joyous sight and sound proclaims the influence of his beloved. Nature must surely share his love of her. A summer cloud confers with the ocean how it might woo her attention.

"But were I thou, O ocean,
I would not chafe and fret,
As thou, because a limit
To thy desires is set.

I would command strange creatures
Of bright hue and quick fin
To stir the water near her
And tempt her bare arm in.

I'd teach her spend the summer
With me, and I can tell
That were I thou, O ocean,
My love should love me well."

Again and again we are reminded of the poet's tastes, how much he cares for Shakespeare's songs and Sidney's sonnets and Milton's shorter poems and the lyrics of Carew and Campion and Lovelace and Marvel and Herrick. He sets out deliberately to do a tributary thing and under his hand it becomes something delightfully unexpected. It is his genius to be original in spite of himself.

"I love my lady's eyes
Above the beauties rare
She most is wont to prize,
Above her sunny hair,
And all that face to face
Her glass repeats of grace.

For they are still the same
To her and all that see,
But oh her eyes will flame
When they do look on me,
And so above the rest
I love her eyes the best."

Why — I wonder — is that so old and yet so new?

But this playful, trifling humour of love's idler hours which recurs constantly in his pages, is tinged with a genuine, almost solemn reverence for the wonder of love's mystic joy. Words can only suggest it. The best must remain unspoken. The reserve of Bridges is infinitely more emotional than the excessive outpourings of the less reverent

poets. In perhaps his best known lyric he has very beautifully spoken the inner spirit of his silences:

"Love from whom the world begun
Hath the secret of the sun.
Love can tell, and love alone,
Whence the million stars were strewn,
Why each atom knows its own;
How in spite of woe and death,
Gay is life and sweet is breath.

This he taught us, this we knew
Happy in his science true,
Hand in hand as we stood
'Neath the shadows of the wood,
Heart to heart as we lay
In the dawning of the day."

Those critics who claim that Bridges is cold and passionless have completely missed the mind no less than the heart of the man. He is above all else the consecrated poet of joy — joy so sure of itself that it does not need the forced gaieties of carnival seasons, when we "escape from life to put on masks and dance a measure or two with strangers," nor the dusk of dreams when out of mystery we create mystic moods. His joy is for any day — anywhere. It is not because he is a very charming artist that Bridges is a great poet. His art is marred by a few pedantic mannerisms acquired in an environment harmful to spontaneous expression. His greatness is his

humanity. He does not, in proclaiming the joy of living, deny its sorrow, but he does prefer to evade lament — offering for dejection solace of hope and comfortable memory, finding a kinship between pleasure and pain.

"O soul be patient — thou shalt find
A little matter mend all this.
Some strain of music to thy mind
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow
Thy cup with sweetness. Thou shalt taste
Nothing but sweetness and shalt grow
Half sad for sweetness run to waste."

It is ironical indeed that it should be the fate of this shy poet, who shunned publicity and who fears modernity, to be made Poet Laureate, and whose heart beats with the common heart to be regarded as aloof and austere and coldly intellectual. Yet so it is and the lyrics of Robert Bridges shall never belong to the many who miss their meaning but to the few who appreciate their art of exquisite singing, and give thanks for their philosophy of quiet joy.

Book II

I broider the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry.
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me.

. . . . . .

And the only world is the
world of my dreams,
And my weaving the only
happiness,
For the world is only
what it seems.
And who knows but that
God, beyond our guess,
Sits weaving worlds out of
loneliness.

ARTHUR SYMONS — "THE LOOM OF DREAMS"

X

THE DECORATIVE IMAGINATION

WHICH is the more essential purpose of painting — to represent or to decorate? That is a question each man of us must decide for himself, to his own satisfaction at least. Some people assume that pictures should imitate objects according to certain preconceived notions as to what constitutes life-likeness. Anything that is unnatural seems to them unsuccessful since, in their philosophy, the imitation of nature is the only conceivable justification for pictorial art. Should they see a picture where the artist has taken liberties with exact truth for the sake of producing a decorative effect, they will exclaim all in one breath — "I-never-saw-a-sky-like-that,-did-you-ever-see-a-blue-tree?" Should you attempt to give them a conception of a pictorial purpose other than the imitative they will regard you with rather resentful suspicion. They may be insensible to some phases of beauty but they yield to no one in regard to any kind of truth. They are simply utterly lacking in decorative imagination. Then there are others who cannot see anything pictorial about the life that they most ardently enjoy. They will not tolerate

representation. "Why trouble with nature at second hand" they say — "when we can possess the real thing every day? Nature is good enough for us, thank you. As for Art, let it create new forms of beauty in color and design; melodic or harmonious arrangements that will lift us out of ourselves, creating in us impersonal emotions." Now all observant and intelligent men tend more or less to one or the other of these extreme points of view — even you and I, my reader.

Of course extremes are always deplorable. Painting should, according to the painter's temperament in the matter of comparative emphasis, be both representative and decorative, although it can seldom hope to balance these separate functions as they were once so perfectly balanced in "The Surrender of Breda" by Velasquez. Furthermore, the two functions are interdependent. No pictorial representation can hope to attain greatness if it disregards such decorative principles as unity of design and harmony of colour. On the other hand no pictorial decoration can safely maintain its legitimacy among the representative arts if it represents nothing and is expressed merely by abstract colour and line. In so doing it passes into the category of mere ornament. Representative and decorative painting should really be regarded as one and the same art, engaged in special missions and governed by special laws. The difference is merely this, that representative painting, however decorative it

may be, appeals, in its character of *commentary upon life*, through the agency of the sense of sight to the mind and its associations, and only thus, through the mind, to the emotions. Painting on the other hand that is purely decorative acts directly upon the emotions through the independent agency of the æsthetic sense.

It is nevertheless a mistake to suppose that representative pictures cannot decorate nor decorative pictures represent, simply because one type cultivates the concrete and the other the abstract. Japanese art is an illustration of the desirable union of these separate art motives. Few are the ornaments in wood, ivory, lacquer or bronze that are not carved or etched with images of birds and flowers, or temples and landscapes. And there is no Japanese painting or colour print that does not quite confidently assert the right of the artist to represent nature with whatever conventional symbols he chooses to select. After all, decoration is not merely a sensuous beauty of pattern made to please the eye. In the last analysis it is Imagination; the indefinable *spirit* that rejoices in beauty of pattern or beauty of sentiment; the very personal *impulse* that selects a dream or a design and cherishes it; that for some of us exists as taste and for others of us as poetry. Obviously the function of decorative art is to give pleasure, and the spirit that animates its creation is perfectly in accord with that function. The decorative spirit then, although perhaps most

directly applicable to the plastic arts, is a potent force in all art. Let us consider it for a moment in literature.

Before me lie two recent editions of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam as rendered by Edward Fitzgerald into the exquisite English poem we know so well. In these new bottles the old wine retains its richness. The colour prints by Edmond Dulac and Frank Brangwyn sensitively convey the original thrill of the text. Brangwyn's pictures are merely arrangements of jewelled colours, flickering as if about to disappear. Dulac's illustrations are more pictorial, hinting at the mise en scène — the Persia of Omar's day. We feel rather than see the blue of distant mountains, the purple and green of vineyards, the faint, faint tint of roses drenched in moonlight. And this is as it should be. It is with colour we associate the verse. In fact, the greater part of the pleasure that we derive from Fitzgerald's Omar we owe, not so much to its philosophy, as to its sensuous witchery when expressed in the music of memorable words, words dimly revealing beyond the shadows of the proud pessimism a glow of oriental peacock and old ivory. Pessimism that really means despair would affect us very differently, I think. Surely the old poet while he arraigned the universe and renounced all hope was taking his ease on some lofty terrace

> "Losing his fingers in the tresses of
> The cypress, slender minister of wine."

And so we too roll the Orient quatrains under our tongue to suck their flavour

> Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,
> Whether the cup with sweet or bitter run,
> The wine of life keeps oozing drop by drop,
> The sands of life keep falling one by one.

But do we enter through these sad thoughts into a darkening vale? No, rather the enchanted East — the land of golden ports where ships lie sleeping, of storied cities with their mosques and minarets: the land where, in the shade of a comfortable oasis, we would gaze upon the burning skies and terrible sand billows of the desert. Lo, the spirit of decoration has enthralled us! The words have become dreams and the dreams pictures. The reverse being equally true, it was in all seriousness that W. E. Henley once wrote of the paintings of Monticelli "his clangours of bronze and gold and scarlet, his fairy meadows and enchanted gardens are, so to speak, that sweet word Mesopotamia in two dimensions . . . their parallel in literature, the verse one reads for sound's sake only."

The decorative imagination then implies a compromise between the mind and the senses. In paintings it either approaches the thought and sentiment of romantic poetry or the abstract sensation of romantic music. To such extremely different painters as Monticelli and Whistler the same achievement is often ascribed, namely the

creation of colour-music. Although Whistler's colour soothes the sense like subtle webs of sound woven by violins, whereas Monticelli's colour is a fanfare of bugles and drums and clashing cymbals, wild, persistent and exciting, yet the æsthetic philosophy of the two men is, in a sense, the same. Both wished it plainly understood that their appeal to the emotions was not intellectual but visual — a percept rather than a concept of life. In order to make clear his seeking for abstract colour-music, independent of subjects and ideas, Whistler would paint a vast expanse of sea and sky and call his marine not "Cloudy Day on the Coast of France" but "Symphony in Gray and Green" or in "Violet and Blue." When his canvases were made to vanish in the mystery of starlight there was no romance to stir our fancy unless we felt it in the "Harmony of Silver and Blue" or the "Nocturne in Black and Gold." Quite recently I saw a little picture by T. W. Dewing which carried, quite as far as the master would have wished, the symphonic modulation of tone. In a bare, high vaulted room, enveloped in mauve-tinted twilight, two calm dim figures seemed to dwell at the heart of a dark yet lustrous pearl. Both Whistler and Dewing are really imaginative in spite of their colour for colour's sake, just as we may certainly ascribe imagination to certain composers who, true to their art, attempt to express nothing but sound for sound's sake. In each case the imagi-

nation has been stirred by means of the senses. Equally imaginative was the mad dreamer Monticelli. His raptures proceeded from very chaotic mental impressions. Certainly less thought went into the making of his pictures than Persian weavers put into their rugs and Chinese potters put into their porcelains. Yet our minds insist upon playing with these fantasies until out of one picture emerges the court of Haroun al Raschid and out of another the court of the Fairy Queen.

In striking contrast to the sensitive, and at the same time, aggressive refinement of decorative imagination revealed by Whistler and Monticelli in their arbitrary selections of harmony there is the decorative imagination of such an inspired scene-painter as Arnold Böcklin. His mind was impervious to refinements and subtleties of beauty but was richly stored instead with Greek allegory and fable and with his own Germanic legend and literature. From these bookish influences he derived most of the inspiration for his pictures. Yet he was no mere collaborator, content to stage a drama or illustrate a story. Quite the contrary. Like the great Wagner, his imagination invested the historical or mythological episodes of his dreams with an absolutely new glamour. But whereas in the art of Whistler and Monticelli the emotion inevitably grows out of the decoration, since the decoration *is* the emotion, in Böcklin's best picture, "The Island of Death," the mind is

given a definite image to symbolize a definite emotional conception; the stormy sky, the dark and brooding cypresses silhouetted against it, the mysterious sepulchres of awful majesty hollowed out of the soaring amphitheatre of enclosing rock, the stillness of the sea as the barge carrying its shrouded passenger approaches the portentous shore, every detail of the decoration is rich in poetic suggestion. The colours and the design are precise, unalterable, like the words of a great lyric, and in spite of the literary spirit, the language is quite legitimately pictorial. Just as such a picture will affect us like a poem, so many a poem will give us the more concentrated and concise sensation of a picture. Keats, Coleridge, and Rossetti — what sumptuous romantic pictures they painted! The other day I was walking quickly through an exhibition when my glance fell upon a tiny canvas unmistakably the work of Albert Ryder. It was almost without colour and with only a vague whisper of form, yet I was made to pause for a few moments enchanted by the air of old romance. The title was "St. Agnes' Eve" and at once I thought of all the frosty moonlight and stained-glass richness and sweet, enraptured passion of the poem by Keats. But did I need the title and the memories that thronged it? Across a moon-white porch I could see the lovers hurrying, and beyond the Gothic arch a glimpse of moon-flooded country. The suggestion was not really of Keats but of the

ecstatic mood he so exquisitely celebrated. The title gave that little picture of Ryder's a definite literary flavour, but its almost Monticellian sketchiness of style could be called suggestive but not really representative. What I wish to illustrate is the essential similarity of the two styles of decorative imagination, the abstract and the concrete, art for the sake of beautiful pattern and art for the sake of beautiful sentiment. Unity of effect is as essential to one as to the other. If this unity prevails, the two styles are really made one by their identical spirit — the spirit of romantic comedy.

Although literary art should never be merely pictorial, nor pictorial art merely literary, yet there is no reason why one art may not receive suggestion and inspiration from the other in the same way that both receive suggestion and inspiration from Nature. In fact a picture and a poem may supplement each other to mutual advantage. I never see Titian's "Bacchanals" without thinking of two precious passages of Keats, nor can I read those lines without recalling the two superb canvases by Titian. As for the original Greek myth of forsaken Ariadne following Bacchus over the hills and dales of Naxos by the sea, this legend becomes of vital interest to us all because of the inspiration it has been to art so great that it can never die. Through an inspired flash of decorative imagination the genius of Titian revealed the possibilities of emotional expression latent in the

old story; the mood of mind that stirred Ariadne out of her bitter thoughts to become a part of the Pagan joy of earth; to leap and sing through all the glorious morning world, exultant with the mad, glad, pulse of life; to follow the God of the merry heart wherever his whim might lead.

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue,
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!

The earnest trumpet spake and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din,
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!

Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves and faces all a-flame,
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley
To scare thee, melancholy!
I rushed into the folly.

Whence came ye, merry damsels — whence came ye,
So many and so many and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate
Your lutes and gentler fate?
We follow Bacchus — Bacchus on the wing
A-conquering!

Bacchus, young Bacchus, good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide;
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy."

Of course it was impossible, even for so supreme a romantic poet as Keats to rival by the sheer richness of his phrase the colour of so supreme a romantic colorist as Titian. But the poet experienced the same mood as the painter and expressed it with equal fervour and inspiration. He did not attempt to describe or imitate the picture but the wonderful rhythm of its colours and lines and its happy vision of a legendary world thrilled his spirit with a kindred passion, so that through his own medium of many coloured words he too rejoiced to use his decorative imagination. Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne" of the National Gallery, London is not only, from a technical viewpoint, one of the most beautiful things in the world, but it represents the climax — the topmost pinnacle of poetic rapture to which a mere colour-sense may successfully aspire. We do not need to know anything definite about the scene represented. We understand at a glance the mood for which the old myth was but a symbol. We understand what at the same moment fascinates and repels Ariadne as the young wine god, waving his radiant robe into the silvery sky, leaps down from his leopard-drawn chariot. We understand what he means to the bronze-red satyrs, the Earthmen, and to the beautiful Bacchantes with their wind-blown draperies of flame-red and peacock-blue, and to the goat-footed baby boy who with misty eyes skips along, a little dazed by all the frolic and the

ecstasy. The shadows cast by the creamy-tinted, billowy-bosomed clouds transfigure the deep blue mountain tops, the bronze-green valley and the turquoise sea. There is an irresistible onward movement in the sky, and on the earth. Almost overpowering is the exhilaration with joy that tends to madness; the unreasoning, onrushing riot of the winds in heaven and of the hot blood in the veins of youth.

In the "Bacchus and Ariadne" then, Titian conceived a melodious pattern of rhythmic lines and resounding colours that expressed quite perfectly the Renaissance conception of the physical joy of living, also of that passionate, thoughtless, never-ending worship of beauty that delights in life and light and all the lovely things that thrill the soul and pass away. In the Bacchanal of the Prado Gallery, Madrid, the means of expression are the same and the subject similar, but the mood expressed is somehow quite different. Here the tones are less vibrant, and more mellow, chestnuts, plums and deep crimsons predominating. The texture and surface quality of the pigments and the canvas are varied and controlled for emotional effect as a great composer varies and controls the orchestration of his symphony. We are made one with Bacchus and his crew. Their richness of mood, their luxury of well-being is ours for all time. The revel of the morning has spent its frenzy, and the revellers are a little weary of their wine and song. The old satyr who

has been treading grapes on the sunny hill top lies face upward watching the clouds drift by. The purple stream still trickles down the slope to the luscious pool where the young men fill once more their goblets. A few are singing. A few are dancing. But the animation is no longer general. Glad are the fair Bacchantes to throw themselves down on the pleasant shore and let the low sounds of the sea merge with the drowsy spell of golden afternoon. Dreamily we gaze with them at the sails of a great galleon outspread in the lingering light. The shadows are lengthening. The day is fading. Already it seems best to revel no more — only to muse how merry we have been, how good it is to renew one's youth with love and laughter and the balm of golden air. Once, in the midst of a poem full of passionate dejection, Keats yearned for the beauty of a Southland Bacchanal.

> O for a draught of vintage that hath been
> Cooled a long age in the deep delved earth,
> Tasting of Flora and the country green,
> Dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth!
>
> O for a beaker full of the warm south,
> Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
> With beaded bubbles winking at the brim
> And purple stained mouth,
> That I might drink and leave the world unseen
> And with thee fade into the forest dim.

There was a great difference after all between the symbolism of Titian and of Keats. The dream that was but a poignant feverish desire to the overstrained mind of the dying poet was the incarnation of joy replete and overflowing to the triumphant painter of perhaps the most delightful romantic comedy that the world has ever known. But the decorative imagination that was the magic of Titian was also the magic of Keats.

Whistler quarrelled all his life because people would not take his ideas about decoration seriously. He kept saying that nature is the keyboard, and the artist the composer who chooses and arranges his notes and combines them into chords in order that harmony may result. The idea was not original. It came from old Japan. Nor was Whistler the discoverer of the truth that atmosphere is the great harmonizer, that the great envelopment of air is not only the one medium for seeing things truthfully but the most perfect means for seeing them harmoniously, by the fusion of nature's various colours in nature's artistry of light. Velasquez proved all this centuries ago. Whistler was so afraid of sentiment and so afraid of being, after all, like other people, that he was inclined to exalt the technical finesse of his art and to conceal the inspirational sentiment of his spirit. Fortunately, every now and then he would let himself go, and in one burst of eloquence, he revealed the Occidental motive that inspired his Japanesque nocturnes; the impulse

to reveal spiritual beauty close at hand, even on Chelsea embankment outside of his own front door, where "when the evening mist clothes the humble river-side with poetry, the poor buildings are lost in the dim sky and the tall chimneys become campaniles and the warehouses are palaces in the night." Whether we prefer to express the decorative spirit that is forever buoyant in the heart of man with concrete and intellectual, or with abstract and purely sensuous charms, in short, whether we chose to follow Italy or the Orient in our style of decoration — this depends upon our individual tastes and temperaments. Personally I crave the beauty that is "life enhancing" in every possible phase of its glorious existence.

XI

THE SPIRIT OF ROMANTIC COMEDY

I HAVE always held that unlike science and law, philosophy is essentially a matter of personal feeling and consequently of innumerable variations; that like poetry and religion it is born anew out of each individual consciousness, rather than out of other mens' brains and books. Be that as it may, it is beyond dispute that the most vital philosophies of all, are those uncatalogued states of mind which we call *moods*, so closely related to us and our affairs as we go our various ways, that they are not so much subjects for study in themselves as undeveloped resources for our thoughts and actions, our dreams and creations. They are like ploughed fields of human life, these moods, and if the soil is fertile, and the sun and the rain do their germinal work, out of the seeds of observation and experience may spring harvests of great material and spiritual value. These states of mind need not be merely mental but may be also temperamental and subconscious. Of such a kind is the delicate, elusive mood I have lately been pursuing. It comes quietly into being from a million vague influences. But however indefinite the cause, of the result it is possible to say

that it is a philosophical attitude toward life which we may call, however inadequately, the spirit of romantic comedy.

It is a spirit born of leisure and of pleasurable, purposeless half-hours, such a spirit as the strictly practical people might find it difficult to wholly understand — and tolerate. Nor could it be expected of materialists to regard it otherwise than with suspicion. For it is, in the last analysis, a wistful prolongation of the philosophy of childhood, as sweet and unreasonable a thing as that. Many and many of us there are who, like Mr. Barrie's dream boy Peter Pan, are loath to abandon our lands of make-believe, reluctant to exchange our princely life in the familiar realms of Never-Never Land, where nothing is impossible because everything is untrue, for a rational existence in some commercial city where the elusiveness of our fancies may be soon replaced by the obviousness of ten thousand facts, and where, settled in some comfortable groove, we may scorn to believe in Fairies, demand a reason for everything and by excess of business become dull to the joy of living. In his very beautiful essay on "Child's Play," Robert Louis Stevenson urged us to remember how indifferent we once were to the inscrutable ways of our elders "upon whom we merely glanced from time to time to glean hints for our own mimetic reproductions." "Two children playing at soldiers," he continues, "are far more interesting to each other than the scarlet

being both are busy imitating. Art for art is their motto. Not Gautier nor Flaubert can look more callously upon life, and rate the reproduction more highly over the reality." This delectable comment, like many others in the essay, reveals Stevenson's unbroken association with the dream-days of childhood. Like Peter Pan he never really grew up and out of his dreams. He wrote boys' books to the end and never lost his relish for adventure in life and art. To be sure, he indulged in retrospect and in sentimental philosophising, both prerogatives of the mature mind. But the spirit of his art was derived from the spirit of play. The castles built in air by any imaginative child as typically represent the primitive impulse as do the books of Stevenson the inspired expression of a spirit common to both — the spirit of romantic comedy.

What do I mean by this phrase "The spirit of romantic comedy?" Romance implies glamour, a sense of beauty that also hints at strangeness. Comedy implies light-heartedness, a forgetfulness of, or an indifference to, life's more serious affairs. Both romance and comedy imply a recognition of life as drama. Shakespeare expressed the thought and it has become one of the precious platitudes: "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players." But there is a difference between the dramatic functions of romance and of comedy. When we are young and in love, when some vision of a vanished

age flashes like a remembered dream across our path, when we stand on the threshold of mystery, or face alone the imminence of tragic gloom, then romance is close at hand. But when our minds have taken to the open road with purposes as blithe and whimsical and wayward as the breeze on a May morning, then for all the beauty and strangeness, for all the sentiment and sorrow of the world, nothing seems to really count with us save laughter. And there is a vast difference between the temperaments of romanticist and humorist. The true romanticist does not need the settings of the theatre to put him in the mood for strutting and fretting his hour upon the stage. He may outwardly conduct himself soberly and with discretion. But behind the closed doors of his mind a pretty drama is constantly in rehearsal. How his enemy writhes beneath the well-turned rapier of his wit! How the fair lady of his heart's desire nestles within his strong arm! Or, if adversity crushes his hopes, if the enemy or the lady humbles his pride, how powerful is his woe, how irresistible his denunciation of gods and men. When all is well with him the world is a goodly place. He responds to its pleasures with a fervent gusto. But if he has been worsted in love or in business, if he has played to empty houses, or if the curtain has descended upon him amid disdainful silence, how "flat, stale and unprofitable" the earth can be for him in very truth! A good lover and a good hater,

with a great hunger for life and a nice taste in art, he is, take him for all in all, a good fellow, the romanticist. But he lacks that quality without which no man is safe in our uncertain existence, the quality which would have sweetened him and steeled his stout heart against adversity far better than his clamour of grievances — a sense of humour. Your humorist, in no matter how sorry a situation you find him, is never altogether overwhelmed and comfortless. Fate may have tricked him and left him no more prosperous than those waifs the sparrows. But if he is like them, despised — he is also like them, chipper. All is not lost. He can still enjoy the ridiculous. Not knowing where we are, or why we are, or what we are — life, he says, is a huge joke, not to be taken with such a deep sigh and such a long face. Oh, he is a man the sad and weary old world could ill afford to do without — the humorist. But is there no soul in him? Will nothing ever make him serious?

Fortunately the Creator quite frequently blends the types, and it is difficult to say whether we are more indebted to him for the romancers with a sense of humour, or for the humorists with a soul for romance. Most of the really great poets and thinkers belong to the first category and to the second, the universal humorists whose great-hearted laughter has been the world's most genuine wisdom. Art, too, has flourished because some men have been endowed with both a sense

of humour and a sense of glamour and the quality of art thus produced is of a most subtle and fascinating quality. Comedy in the arts, if allowed to run its natural course, tends to humorous situation and expression, romance to tragedy or at least to melodramatic incident and action. But tempered, the one by the other, we may expect not necessarily either a humorous or a romantic story but a mood, an intellectual flavour, a dream-like fabric in which humour and glamour are so interwoven that the effect thereby produced pleases us wholly by reason of its indefinite emotional quality — seeming to sound responsive chords of intimate feeling long silent within us. This romantic comedy can express itself merely by suggestions, conveyed through symbols of colour and form, of sound and measure, of musical, colourful and meaningful words. It may be fantasy, satire, make-believe. It may be a little faded in colour or indefinite in outline, as are all composite things. Almost might one compare it to an observation that becomes transformed in the describing or to a dream of the night that takes on new meaning in the light of day. The country parties that Watteau depicted seem oppressed by a vague, insistent melancholy, yet this sadness of the artist's spirit he disguised by a semblance of vivacious gaiety. The little street scenes and landscapes of Decamps appear, at first sight, mere trifles of colourful and pleasant humour. But soon enough they reveal to us their truly Oriental witchery.

When the romanticist is endowed with a sense of humour, he may still wish to hold the centre of the stage, to go a-questing on some senseless, perilous mission, his every nerve a-thrill with the possibilities for glory and the zest of the crusade. But now the worst foe to his self-esteem, the greatest peril in his path, is that he might appear ridiculous to himself. When the humorist is endowed with a sense of glamour, he may still desire to see the world, just as it is, without any such deceptive properties as limelight. He may still wish to laugh away all the froth and sham of sentimentality and bombast. But there comes a time when his laughter at day-dreams rings hollow and false; when he, the jester, would cherish a vision of the golden age and in the moonlight be a Romeo. With his wit he has held men to the Realities, but the Realities have played him false. As he looks back upon his life the day-dreams seem the most vital, certainly the most beautiful, part of his existence. He has, let us say, amused men with his nonsense. He has said that everything in life is wildly ridiculous; that cows might any time take to golf in the pasture or to polite conversation with the milk-maid. Why not? Stranger things have happened. But now he does not laugh. He says to the romanticist "You are right; there is a glamour about this mad old world that haunts me as it has haunted you. Everything is indeed possible to us because our minds have dreams and

our spirits wings and the realities cannot confine us. "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players." Let us return to the spirit of our childhood. Let us make believe. And so to humour there is added the sense of glamour, and to glamour the sense of humour; and because the spirit of man must expand and express its joy in the magic of the mysterious world, Nature supplies the materials for creations of mimetic and imaginative beauty, and art comes into being that a richer life may result.

It was that prophet of self-culture, Walter Pater, who said that "the basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days." In other words, art is not a reproduction, but a transforming representation of life. Whether the artist has treated his theme in a realistic or in a romantic fashion matters little, his function has in either case been a representative one, representative, not necessarily of his observation, but of himself. Perhaps he has sensuously and thoughtlessly celebrated the beauty of his subject in sound or colour or clay. Perhaps he has criticised it in one of its phases, expressing through the medium of his particular art his particular thought and feeling. How often we hear it said of some dramatist, novelist or painter who is rigorously imitative and impersonal in method — "this is not art, this is a slice of life," or some such phrase. Nonsense! We

cannot possibly rival Reality with our realism. All we can do is to represent, each of us his own impression. If the representation is close to the reality, there remains one insuperable barrier between, and that barrier is the artist. When shall we learn that Art is not so truly the reflection of Nature as of human nature? Let the different schools then cease to wrangle. The fit shall continue to survive the unfit as it was in the beginning and all who are true artists whether they are romantic or realistic shall perform fundamentally the same function — that of transforming the meaner world of their common days into a happier world of their own creation. Why a happier world? Because art implies joy, not necessarily in the thing expressed, but in the means, the glorious possibility of the soul's expression. Where there is no soul there is no art. It is from the alembic of the soul that the essence of truth emerges yet more true, and of beauty yet more beautiful.

The artist therefore seeming to take his art more seriously than his life, lightly assumes this or that point of view even as a child assumes various characters in his make-believe. To the child play is the all-important part of the day's business. And it is out of this same spirit of play that the no less joyous and irresponsible spirit of art unfolds, to be all in all for the artist. Alike to the make-believing child and to the make-believing artist the world is full of glorious

possibilities for fun and fantasy. Granting then the kindred inwardness of child's play and the arts of men, the whimsical earnestness of mind and effervescence of spirit necessary for both, let us think once more of our subject, the spirit of romantic comedy and of its devotees. They are the men for whom dreams are the truest truth, for whom romance can never die, for whom the world is still as strange as story books, for whom the golden age exists once more. The Golden Age, when everyone was young and happy and had his desire, when beauty was everywhere and there was neither passion nor pain — why should it be the joy only of the Ancients? The myth-makers of every race afforded this dreamy thought to their people so that in their weariness of spirit, when baffled by the business or the narrowness of their lives, they might escape from themselves and thinking upon happy things attain at least a measure of happiness. Art itself being as we have seen an escape from fact, from the relentless pressure of undeniable truths, artists soon found in the depiction of the Golden Age their richest opportunities for self-expression. Especially in Italy during that flowery springtime, the early Renaissance, men cherished the dream of an Earthly Paradise where may be found all that is desirable in existence and where all that is undesirable may be forgotten. In London's National Gallery there is a small anonymous Italian painting, dating from the late fifteenth

century, which seems to represent Plato's conception of the Golden Age, of course from the North Italian point of view.[1] Whoever painted it, the little dream is of rare charm, less by reason of its now damaged beauty than because of its quaint subject and sentiment. In a pleasant landscape where wild animals live in peace among men and the earth is overflowing with ferns, and fruits, and flowers, a benevolent monarch, ruling we suppose by love rather than by law, is receiving the homage of his people. At the foot of his throne a gentleman strums lazily on a mandolin. Nothing could be more serene. Later we find, instead of this boyish conception, a mature vision of the Happy Land, its vague blissfulness, its rich, incredible loveliness. Such a painting is Giorgione's "Pastoral Symphony" of the Louvre which seems to soothe the spirit like strains of sweetest music in moments of idle, dull content, or of swift enraptured memory. The Golden Age therefore has not vanished beyond recall. It lives in the dreams and games of imaginative children when their lot is cast in pleasant places. It lives in the dreams and works of imaginative artists when they have dared to listen to the voice from inmost dreamland calling them.

Such an artist is Réné Ménard, the most poetic

[1] Catalogued School of Giorgione and by some critics attributed to the master himself in his early youth. Judging from some mannerisms characteristic of that excellent although little known painter of Cremona, I believe that the author is Bartolomeo Veneto.

painter since Corot. No other living master of artistic expression responds to so fresh and fine an inspiration. He frankly acknowledges that he is more in sympathy with the ancients than with the restless impulses and conflicting purposes of modernity. To the beauties of Greek poetry, architecture and sculpture, his mind turns back with genuine longing, and it is his aim to express something of the lost Homeric simplicity and strength, and of the lost Theocritan sweetness and serenity. But he would express all this in a modern way, through the modern medium of landscape painting, chanting his personal love for the youth of the world and the mystical days when gods dwelt among men, through a symbolism of oak forests and starlit streams, of many sounding seas and everlasting hills. Within this dreamland the shepherds of Theocritus, the heroes and horses of the Parthenon frieze, seem a part of the rhythmical harmony of Nature. As for the landscapes, they are the homeland of a cultivated mind when it is aimlessly and deeply dreaming. The Greeks would have painted just such landscapes had they known the secret. Even the colours disclaim realistic intent. If the forms are intellectual and Greek, the colours are emotional and of the Venetian Renaissance. Their grave harmonies and subdued glories of tone communicate the artist's own exaltation and peace of spirit.

On the walls of Ménard's studio in Paris hang

replicas in pastel of practically all of his important compositions. The effect is most impressive. When I entered this room one hot afternoon last summer, I breathed a sigh of relief and of rejoicing. Here was the remedy for the ugliness and the disillusionment of the boulevards and of the exhibitions. I had seen the detestable pictures of Matisse and his gang of post-Impressionists. Like ill-bred children they seemed to shout in my ear their favorite impudence "Le laid c'est le beau." I had seen at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs an interesting innovation in mural painting by Aman Jean that seemed to sum up for me the spirit of modern art in Paris, if not of modernity in general. On a bench in a park three young girls droop listlessly, their every look and gesture indicating ennui. It is evidently a picnic, for fruit and cake have been laid upon the lawn. But they seem ill at ease, these objects, under the gloomy stare of an aproned domestic who sits beside them brooding. A young worldling has mirthlessly dressed up an old poodle with his plumed hat and theatrical cloak, and on the cloak sits a monkey, clashing cymbals. But the drearily bored young women are anything but amused. Even the dachshund on a chair looks quite contemptuous. In the studio of Réné Ménard I forgot all this. After the mental stuffiness of the schools it was sweet to breathe the clear, pure air that blows from wind-swept Ilium. But the wonder of it, this

dream of a world amid the various sensations and preoccupations of the boulevard Montparnasse! I expressed my wonder to the artist. His answer was straight to the point: "Mais je peux poursuivre mon rêve." To pursue one's dream — through a mocking or at least indifferent world — is not that the spirit of child's play, the spirit of art, the spirit of romantic comedy?

There is one essential difference between this spirit in child's play and in the mature arts and moods of men. The make-believing child, as Stevenson said "spends three-fourths of his time in a dream and the rest in open self-deception." But to grown men and women the living of their own lives is drama enough. It is one of the compensations for growing up that with the larger wisdom of the years comes the delicate appreciation of the poetry that is the soul, even of science, and of the mystery that abides even at the open heart of truth. Many of us, it is true, find unconscious delight in returning to the point of view of our childhood, revelling in certain stage properties of romance as the child revels in his cardboard castles and tin soldiers. But such pleasure is now our pastime, no longer our philosophy. And even when we are most romantic it is not, in the old sweet way, for the sake of the romance, but professedly at least, for some more serious purpose. The birdmen who fly on their man-made wings up, up to the dizzy height of four miles into infinite cloudland — they are not

flying for flying's sake in spite of the wild joy of their adventure. They are solemnly establishing the supremacy of Man over the Natural powers of Air, just as other conquerors have long since established his dominion over the natural powers of Earth. What make-believe adventure could be more romantic than such calculating calm business as that? But although I suppose every one can see the glamour in the life of the aeronaut, it is not so easy to appreciate the romance of the average uneventful existence. A certain philosophy is necessary for such deep perception and few of us have time now-a-days for philosophy especially when it is not definitely formulated in books. Yet such a state of mind is the best sort of an equipment for the knightly ordeal of life. It is obvious that the man for whom life is a drama will take more pains to play a hero's part than the man who just submits to a period of forced labour and imprisonment, or joylessly squanders an embarrassment of time. I read the other day, in a very readable new book by Mr. Holbrook Jackson, that "Gilbert Chesterson possesses a toy theatre of which he is not only sole proprietor but scene-painter, playwright, general manager and manipulator, all rolled into one. His favourite play is 'St. George and the Dragon' which may be taken as a symbol of his own life and point of view. The play's the thing, but the play is the eternal play of light triumphing over darkness. In real life Chesterton goes forth

MONUMENT OF CANGRANDE

By an Unknown Sculptor

every day to slay the Dragon of Despair. That is his romance — that is his joy. And his faith forever tells him that all his comrades shall ultimately meet to drink with him 'from the great flagons in the tavern at the end of the world.'"

Ah, yes, life is a drama of humour and of glamour and death is the tremendous climax. The spirit of romantic comedy regards death with the most eager curiosity. That painter of oft-times grotesque imaginings, Arnold Böcklin, in a remarkable portrait once imagined himself overtaken by the grim messenger. Wide-eyed, alert, every sense awake, "a-tiptoe on the highest point of Being" he listens to the thrilling secret told in music to his ear. Strongest is he still among us and wisest, who can thus bear himself without fear and without reproach, and go forth to conquer circumstance high-spirited and happy-hearted. One of my richest memories of the memorable old town of Verona is the tomb of the most illustrious of the Scaligers, the host of the exiled Dante, Can Grande. His effigy on horseback, horse and man in full battle-armour, need not be taken as his true image. But this is no ordinary tomb. There is an idea in the statue, a tribute to character, as if the mediæval sculptor had been stirred by the inspiration of a great man to the expression of a great thought. The conqueror's helm has been thrown back and we behold him on his way to battle, yet grinning in the very face of Death with the joy of a single

merry moment. Indulgence then in the spirit of romantic comedy is not merely a luxury for the dreamer of dreams. It is to be well-armoured for our brave adventure.

"For romance is not dead nor can it die —
Until the springtime lose its fragrant breath,
When in the light of love all things are fair,
Until no more Man hears some battle-cry,
Until he goes no more to meet his death
Into the Dark fearless and debonnaire."

XII

ROMANTIC COMEDY IN EARLY ITALIAN PAINTING

IT is a natural but deplorable tendency of the historian of art to emphasize the production of a master, and pass quickly by the work of his pupils and immediate followers, on the assumption that they must be merely imitators, with nothing of their own invention to consider. This is a mistake, both because of the injustice often done to the artist thus belittled, and because it is often impossible to gauge the entire artistic aspiration of a remote century by the study of only two or three of its more outstanding creators. Giotto is now estimated at his true worth as a man of exceptional genius, endowed with an amazing instinct for the decorative and the dramatic. He inaugurated naturalistic observation and may justly be entitled the father of modern realism. He discovered all that we know about space composition and deserves with equal justice to be called the father of modern mural decoration. His soul was deeply stirred by the drama of human life, especially as symbolized by the life of Christ. To express great moments of great emotion, this was his aim. With an instinctive understanding of the limits of pictorial expression,

he never attempted to depict more drama than the eye can see at one moment. Well may we wonder at the untaught genius of the man. Yet in his very greatness as an artist lay the cause of his incompleteness as an initiator. In his noble purpose to get directly to the heart of his dramatic conceptions and omit irrelevant detail, he cultivated an amazing indifference to all the inanimate objects of natural beauty and to all the trifling incidents and casual momentary appearances of the actual world. So mediæval was he in his æsthetic point of view that he never allowed himself to be merely entertaining, and was quite unconscious of a need for a background to his human drama. And so we are confronted with the paradox of Giotto's art, which is also the paradox of the mediæval mind, a splendid emotional energy, eager to possess the truth, yet converted into a shallow, because impersonal, symbolism by its disregard of man's relation to his surroundings. If then, Giotto's followers had been merely imitators, there would have been no familiarity with and appreciation of the pictorial possibilities of life itself. There would have been none of that romantic glamour cast over the realities by personal vision, which constituted the many-sided charm of the Italian Renaissance, and which remains to-day the soul of modern art.

The frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli in the Riccardi Chapel at Florence do not, like the frescoes of Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua, represent

a culmination of the spirit of the middle ages nor a prophecy of the decoration of modern times, but just the buoyant, healthy, imaginative childhood of an art that is happy in the unstudied and unsorted charms of the present moment and content to be gay and thoughtless with the youth that comes but once. Benozzo was everything that Giotto was not, and nothing that he was. He had no conception of pictorial unity nor of the well-proportioned design of a given space. He was stirred by no great emotions, and penetrated to none of the essential significances. So fond was he of just the things Giotto despised, — the inanimate objects of natural beauty, the trifling incidents and momentary appearances of the visible world, that these things were crowded together on his pictures with the most boyish disregard for consistency and the most obvious ignorance of that first æsthetic principle, selection. Decidedly, Benozzo was no great genius like Giotto. Yet he loved the gaiety and the glamour of life, and he had a vague idea that his art could not be better employed than with representing this gaiety and glamour, as much of it at least as he could afford to paint with the colours that his patrons of the house of Medici provided.

This interest in life, for the sake of its pleasantness and beauty, was the seed from which was soon to flower the Renaissance of Italian painting. It by no means originates with Benozzo but with

the contemporaries and imitators of Giotto. For although the master himself seems to have had little interest in the external aspects of the earth, yet we find Altichieri at Verona drawing a little group of soldiers in the North Italian armour of the period throwing dice in the very shadow of the Cross of Calvary, and at Siena in the Palazzo Pubblico is the famous fresco by Simone Martini of a stout dignitary riding forth to battle on a weird charger, along castle walls bristling with spears but ever so much smaller than himself. In the adjoining room the allegories by Ambrogio Lorenzetti are chiefly interesting for their historical suggestiveness. Yet they reveal true powers of observation and an awakened sense of the pictorial. Farmers are depicted coming through the gates of fourteenth-century Siena from the wide harvest fields with their fruit and grain packed on the backs of donkeys. Under the grim brick battlements they pass on into the streets of the prosperous town. Through the open door of one house we look in upon a lecture. In another corner a group of children have joined hands and are dancing in a ring. Then came Paolo Uccello, a bold initiator with a true decorative and romantic spirit. His battle scenes are, to be sure, a trifle ludicrous, the thick-necked horses that rear and plunge about amid the welter of pikes and lances resembling the wooden animals of the merry-go-round and the nursery. But the subject is a most daring and difficult one from a

technical view point, and that such subjects should have been attempted at the beginning of the fifteenth century, reveals the spirit of adventure now uppermost in art. The monks even were alive to the new interest, for, although Fra Angelico was absorbed in his devout reveries, Fra Lippo Lippi was of the earth earthy, and his paintings of the Virgin and attending angels are full of the fresh physical beauties of girls and flowers. At the home church in Prato, he painted the Banquet of Herod with Salome dancing. Romanticism was well upon its way.

But now let us return to the Riccardi Chapel and linger a moment longer with that delightful person Benozzo Gozzoli. At Pisa he painted an idyllic picture of a Tuscan vintage to illustrate the drunkenness of Noah. Here at Florence the Journey of the Three Kings was converted into an excursion of the Medici and their visitors from the Orient and their retinue of flunkies over the hills of Tuscany. But despite its Florentine farms and villas, the landscape through which passes the brilliant cavalcade never really existed save in the minds of children and other dreamers as childlike as Benozzo. Huge brightly coloured birds fly through the air. There are all sorts of animals about, from plain dogs to camels and leopards, and all sorts of growing things, from flowers and mushrooms to cypresses and stone pines. In the fairylike backgrounds glimmer the red roofs of delicious towns, one of them San

Gimignano. But no matter how Tuscan, they are none the less make-believe, for that somehow is the spirit of Benozzo. Oh, but the passing pageant is gay on those dark walls of the little chapel — gay as the images of a dream that leaves the awakening mind blurred and bewildered with the sense of having seen and done extraordinary things! The joyous mood which inspired the painter in these frescoes is given, perhaps, its fullest expression in the panels representing Paradise. Here the landscape is fairly overrun with pretty angels, many of them making a joyful noise unto the Lord, others skipping along the fields with burdens of fruits and flowers. But one and all of the heavenly maids are wearing peacock wings.

The residence of Benozzo in Umbria for a number of years had a most decided influence on Umbrian art, which was just then in a formative stage. The genial and entertaining spirit of the Florentine decorator, combined with the important technical studies in aerial distances of that greatest of the Umbrians, Piero della Francesca, may be said to have produced the Perugian painter Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, who, in turn, handed on Benozzo's spirit of romantic comedy and Piero's mastery of level light to his pupils Perugino and Pinturicchio. But Fiorenzo himself is an acquaintance well worth making. Once you have met him and marked the unique mental attitude of the man, and you are not liable to

forget him soon. His "Miracles of San Bernardino" are curiously new, not so much in what they illustrate as in the way they illustrate it, with the most engaging irony and with a seeming *arrière-pensée*. What the illustrator of these miracles was really interested in was the impressive swagger of the young men at Perugia. They appealed hugely to his pictorial sense with their chic and shapely legs and their little scarlet caps, and they appealed even more directly to his sense of humour. It was an inspiration to make these fashionable pretty fellows the audience for the miracles of San Bernardino. How discreetly incredulous they seem as they stand about selfconscious and yet very much at their ease. They are granting the Saint the favour of their patronage, and at the same time amusing themselves, mildly. And all the while they are themselves a most amusing spectacle. Too vain and flippant to be religious; too dainty and delicate for warfare, they are at least good enough to look at and to laugh at, thought Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. And the thought itself is a new thought for art to indulge in. It has crept mischievously into a religious picture like a truant schoolboy into church. It is not really a thought at all, but a mood, an impulse to luxuriate in good-natured cynicism and in a sort of masquerading fantasticality. There is something of this spirit in Leonardo da Vinci. There is much of it, perhaps too much of it, in modern painting.

Meanwhile the fascination of the new syle of naturalistic oil painting, as practiced in Belgium and made familiar in Italy by the work of Hugo van der Goes, was blended with the even more potent fascination of classical learning — the new world of ancient dreams and fantasies that seemed to offer the Italians that intellectual and æsthetic liberty which for so long a time they had subconsciously desired. Piero di Cosimo was one of the painters whose sensitive spirit responded eagerly to both these inspiring influences from the north and south. One of the most interesting pictures recently acquired by London's National Gallery is Piero's portrait of a knight in armour with the Piazza dei Signori in the background. On the shadowy checkered pavement beneath the Palazzo Vecchio may be seen some Florentine gentlemen absorbed in animated conversation. On the yellow houses of the street beyond the late afternoon sun is glowing. The knight in armour is well enough, but that background, transporting us to the very heart of old Florence, is even better. Imagination, however, was starved by the æsthetic nourishment of the Low Countries, and the hungry mind of the Florentines turned with relish to the romantic images of Greek allegory and fable. The classical impressions derived from the schools of Florence at this period were of such vaguely glimmering quality as the impressions of dreamy little boys who browse in big books that they scarcely under-

stand. And, just as children grasp most eagerly images that seem to them most strange and startling, so the early Florentine classicists were drawn rather to the fantastic symbols of Greek pantheism than to the serene spirit of Greek poetry. Pass from the portrait by Piero, of which I have spoken, to his well-known "Death of Procris" in the adjoining room, and note how a self-assured though restless realism may easily develope into an immature appreciation of romance, and in so developing, become in a sense less successful but infinitely more important. For in this quaint and delightful Gothic conception of a classic story, a poignant note is sounded, as of indefinite longing and of haunting experience. In the foreground we witness the inarticulate suffering of a faun at the death of his well-beloved. Procris is cold and still, with the bright warm lights and colours of the spring-time all around her, and her woodland lover and faithful dog wistfully mourning the pity of her fate. The clear bright enamelled colours of the flowers and grasses and the beautiful blue background of lake and sky have a Flemish origin, and for a similarly naïve expression of romantic feeling in the telling of a sweet and simple tale, one must see the pictures of Saint Ursula's pilgrimage by Hans Memlinc in the quiet hospital of Bruges.

The classicism then of Piero di Cosimo amounted simply to a hankering for greater freedom of imagination. The Greek spirit was

really as alien to him as to that other more distinguished dreamer of ancient dreams, Sandro Botticelli. Writers in commenting upon this master invariably use the same words and phrases, — "classical rhythm," "mediæval mysticism," "intense sensibility," "yearning for an intangible something." There is a passionate anxiety always noticeable in this artist's work to discard the actualities and the appeal of the senses, and return to a Greek world of abstract thought or an early Christian world of disembodied revery. Yet all this really proceeds from a jaded worldliness, a nature prone to self-indulgence in the luxury of moods. The reason for Botticelli's popularity now-a-days is that we thoroughly understand his unquiet mind and aspiration. Rossetti and Burne-Jones expressed the same vague feelings but they only reminded us, not that they belonged to the fifteenth century in Italy but that Botticelli belongs to the nineteenth century in London, or in any other age or place where life has become too complicated to be entirely healthy. And yet the disillusioned melancholy of the neurotic artists — such men as Botticelli and Rossetti, Watteau and Verlaine — their melancholy is synonymous with a very vivid sense of life's glamour. And in the end their thoughtful works, so sad in spirit, so often tragic in temperament, have that lyrical quality which serves to steep the mind in a beautiful dream of life's magic and its masquerade. As I sat before Botticelli's

"Primavera" at the Florence Academy I felt its fascination quite overcoming a cherished prejudice. I realized that although Botticelli was not a great colorist yet he was, in a very true sense, an impressionist in his use of colours.

On my first visit to this picture I scribbled in my note-book the following interpretation: In the twilight of this dim, mysterious wood where the spirit seeks to dwell when haunted by a sweet unrest, it is fitting that the air should be so silvery green, like sea foam in the mist, and that the garment of the month of May should be bedecked with flowers, and of the maidens three a veil of sunflushed dew, and of the Goddess of Love, with her fullness of knowledge and fruition of desire and unsatisfied yearning in the colour of the full-blown petals of the rose. That life is sweet in springtime but with an oppressive languor or foreboding, the painter seems to say. The mind turns back upon itself and dreams its dream, with little apprehensive thrills. Such is the dawn of love in Botticelli's dreamland. We all know the type of mind that he so loved to brood upon, the type that luxuriates in melancholy and takes excitement wearily. People who live like this never quite learn to discount the waywardness of their moods. They are always hungering for thirst and thirsting for hunger. They can always find a pleasure masquerading in their pain and a sharp-eyed pain lurking ambushed in their pleasure. Like the low, wild music that stirs us

with uneasy rhythms to emotions that we cannot explain, this picture of Botticelli's would lead us, lure us, out of all peace of mind forever. Can this be the joy of living — this languid dance of the maidens beneath uplifted arms? No, for they move as move the deep sea waters, fitfully. And the eyes of youth, they are troubled eyes, afraid to be so happy. And the month of May strews flowers over the earth but withholds some unkind secret all her own. And behind the young tree trunks the air is silvery green, like sea foam in the mist.

The intellectual appeal of Botticelli is only a little less modern, a little less for all time, than that of Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo was apparently the first painter who dared to think of the immensity of nature, the miracle of human individuality, the riddle of life's mysterious ebb and flow. His scientific instinct was amazing. His hunger for reality was insatiable. His sense of romance was sure. Almost overpowering seems his genius, whether we think of him as the mage and seer anticipating modern inventions, dreaming of the way that men should fly, or as the poet of the secret heart, the artist who loved to watch the undercurrent of deep waters, and in the slow smiling of women to perceive the swirling eddies at the depths and bubbling ripples on the surface of the soul. His landscapes are very wild and strange, blue-green in tone and full of rocks that the eternal streams have worn away. Hushed

are these haunts with the wonder and the terror one might feel, as Pater suggested, in the caverns at the bottom of the sea or in other "places far withdrawn." But they are only backgrounds for the greater mystery of human life — sometimes a group of wistful women, and little children playing — sometimes a woman's portrait, very exquisite, like that of the incomparable sphinx, Mona Lisa. Half at least of the fascination of this portrait lies in the tantalizing enigma of the lady's smile. Many an interpretation is possible, and each, for the time, seems convincing. Was she a masterful magnificent woman with cruel eyes, directing her underlings through plots and counterplots, smiling disdainfully at their weakness of will? Or, is not her subtle expression, after all, one of weariness and remonstrance, the look of a serious, patient woman's long-enduring of the giddy whirl of revelling Florence? In her grave morality might she not have been a convert of Savonarola's? And yet could she have been a good woman with such eyes? Surely she had experienced many things and sheltered many secrets. And judging from the little twitch of malicious amusement at the corners of her mouth — people might think of her what they wished, but her secrets they would never know. When I think of her, it is not lightly, to speculate about La Gioconda, what she might or might not have been, but to brood upon the eternal woman that she symbolizes and upon the fantastic background

that symbolizes the glamour-haunted hiding-places of our own souls.

Botticelli and Da Vinci therefore are chiefly fascinating and important because they introduce new phases of artistic expression. Ever since Giotto, pictures had been more or less imitative. Whatever romance pervaded this immature naturalism was a matter of temperament on the part of the artist — an exuberance of gay spirits in Benozzo Gozzoli, a keen sense of the fantastic in Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. But soon enough this increasing indulgence in the display of romantic temperament made possible the genius of Botticelli, who, diverted from life by his infatuation with learning, may be said to represent "the particular moment in history when the mediæval was aspiring to the classical with infinite though ineffectual desire." Da Vinci, at the same moment, represents the romantic temperament, no longer seeking beauty on the outside of things, like Lippo Lippi, nor in the realms of metaphysics, like Botticelli, but in the deep places of human consciousness and experience. Pictorial art had become thoroughly subjective, not unconsciously but deliberately, and with clear comprehension of art as a means for presenting definite impressions and effects. This subjectivity, however, was more intellectual than æsthetic. To appreciate Botticelli one should bear in mind the confusion of influences in Florence at his day. One should think of Lorenzo di Medici and La

Bella Simonetta and Savonarola and the revived legend of Aphrodite rising from the sea. To appreciate Da Vinci one should know his life from Vasari and his profound, adventurous intellect from his writings. Painting, therefore, was not yet capable of appealing directly to our sense of sight, independent of the mind and its associations. The independence of the eye which enables painting to be regarded as a self-sufficient creation, not merely as an illustration of a story or a dogma — the philosophy, in other words, of art for art's sake was first proclaimed by the Venetians of the Renaissance, by Giorgione and by Titian. But we may find its principles being almost unconsciously absorbed and professed in the later works of the founder of the Venetian School — Giovanni Bellini. Perhaps it was from the glorious marbles and mosaics of San Marco or from the precious ornament imported from the Golden East that Venetian painters learned, even in the earliest period of Byzantine church decoration, to regard colour, as we now regard music — as in itself — a language of the emotions. The new oil medium which Bellini was the first Venetian painter to employ, was practised by him with such inspiration in the giving of richness and transparency to his tones, that the actual technique of painting took on a significance and a dignity which hitherto men had only dimly apprehended. Beauty of a strictly æsthetic kind was slowly but surely formulated in the work of

this master of old masters. Appearing at first in the clear mountain air and sunset splendours of landscape backgrounds to most dolorous pictures, it came in the end to make these backgrounds of equal importance with the figures in emotional expression.

The little picture of madonna and saints on a platform overlooking a lake, in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, is commonly regarded as an allegory involving the Tree of Life. Yet what it means I neither know nor care to know. It may be that the painter did have some meaning to express, in which case he failed to make his idea intelligible. Any well-conducted tourist might with sufficient reason disapprove of the incoherence and improbability of the conception. Would saints, for instance, ever meet in quite so disorderly and casual a manner? Could St. Sebastian have possibly looked so bored and nonchalant, even for a moment? "What's the use of posing anyhow?" he seems to be thinking. "There are so many other saints at this party, that to be stuck with arrows appears to be no distinction at all." I have an idea that Bellini dreamt this picture. Perhaps just before he fell asleep he had been marshalling in his mind the images of the various saints he was commissioned to paint. In his dream they had all assembled to discuss the arrangement of the picture and many other things beside. Even St. Anthony in his cave was within speaking distance of the

marble platform on which the madonna and saints were holding their informal conference. In the centre several babies were playing around a tree, the Christ Child one of them. For, tired of the grown-up talk, he had left His mother's arms. It was all then very obviously a dream, with its confusion and its artlessness. But it was a delicious dream, for the platform overlooked a little limpid lake that mirrored the most fantastic rocks, agate-colour in the shadows and old ivory in the light. A canopy of ruby red sheltered Our Lady, and the dreamer wondered whether, upon awakening, he would remember how rich a red it was. So impossible was it to make sense out of the proceedings on that platform that the dreamer just kept looking with joy at the wonderful colours and at the saints with much surprise — as they seemed to act in ways so human and unselfconscious. After all, why shouldn't they look like this in pictures instead of always posing around a throne? Out of the jumble of such riotous thoughts and images, I like to think this little picture grew. It has about it the magic of dreams. Its thrilling colour, its bewitching nonsense, its mood of complete detachment from the actual world, all seem to testify that this is a dream come true — a phantom of sleep remembered and given perpetual life through the newborn magic of art. What does it all mean? I neither know nor care to know. Interpretations are no longer necessary as they were with the

dreams of Botticelli and Da Vinci. The humour and the glamour that pervade this apparition are meaning enough for me.

The spirit of romantic comedy, therefore, was at last given immortal expression with the help of the spirit of art for art's sake. Giorgione and Titian then emancipated themselves completely from the rule of the Church, and in giving free play to their fancy, expressed their personal taste and temperament But these great romanticists deserve separate consideration. There were other painters of the Quattrocento whose important function it was to connect the romantic impulse of the inspiring Bellini with the romantic achievements of the Venetian Renaissance at its height. Such painters were Cima da Conegliano and Vittore Carpaccio. Although Cima's themes were usually ecclesiastical, occasionally we come upon romantic improvisations. At Berlin there is a little picture of knights duelling on a golden plain, and at Parma, Endymion lies asleep on a wooded knoll overlooking a peaceful valley. In his last period Cima emulated the brothers Bellini and Carpaccio as a painter of sumptuous Venetian pageants. But this was Carpaccio's particular field, especially when the ceremonies could be made to represent not merely *scenes* but *stories*. He had no conscience whatever in regard to the law of pictorial unity, crowding his surfaces with literary incidents. Yet he is so delightfully suggestive and so stimulating to our historical dreameries,

that we gladly forgive him and even love him for being so attractively himself — ever the troubadour and teller of tales — ever the sweet-souled, high-spirited observer of a wonderfully spectacular life. And when upon rare occasions he painted a small easel picture — how good it is in colour and light! There are a few scenes from his fluent brush with simple domestic settings, almost Dutch in their fidelity to fact, although pervaded by a sentiment that is pure Italian in its flavour. It is always with a thrill of real affection for the painter that I think of his picture of little blonde St. Ursula, tucked so snugly under a dull red coverlet in her high four-posted bed. The mingling of naturalistic observation with the sense of romance and the hint of strangeness makes this picture most delightful. For although, in her disquieting dream an angel appears to the little girl, all ominous and mysterious, yet we can see her slippers under the bed, her lap dog dozing on the floor, her books still open on the rack where she left them, and the morning sunshine streaming into the quiet room, fresh and warm with the light of another wholesome day. The subtly interwoven strands then of beauty and strangeness — like the pattern of life itself, charm us with much more than Carpaccio's usually ephemeral interest. Here we rejoice with the artist of long long ago in the ageless "life enhancing" spirit of romantic comedy.

XIII

GIORGIONE

ON the fertile, pleasant plain that lies between Venice and the Austrian mountains, in the little town of Castelfranco, about four hundred and forty years ago, was born the first modern master of the art of painting — Giorgione. Before him, in Belgium, the oil medium had been introduced. Before him the scenes of scriptural story, the formulas of the Faith, the saintliness of the saints, had been depicted in coloured pictures for the instruction of the people and for the glory of the popes. Before him, in the works of such inspired dreamers as Da Vinci and Botticelli, the principles of pictorial art had been moulded and the thoughts and sentiments of our own time anticipated. But Giorgione was the first painter to really appreciate the nature of beauty and the beauty of nature. He was the first, not merely to revive the æsthetic spirit of the ancient Greeks who had sought beauty for its own sake, but also to understand that the glorious possibility of art in the Christian civilization was to devote itself to an intensely personal expression. His new æstheticism aspired to no vast abstract beauty but to detect, by means of the individual con-

sciousness, the myriad concrete proofs that the world is beautiful; that there is beauty in the variable expression of the human face, beauties in the trees and hills of home, in the lights of morning and the shadows of afternoon, in colour and character, in music and old memories, in the evanescent moods of every passing hour. Giorgione was the glad prophet of a new spirit to a world that for many dark centuries had stifled the natural but supposedly sinful craving for beauty and truth, and was, before his coming, ever so cautiously groping its way out of ecclesiastical domains into the boundless realms of personal impressionism. Within the space of ten years from the time that the brilliant boy from Castelfranco went down to Venice, he became as Ruskin said, "a fiery heart to it," the chief inspiration of its pictorial Renaissance. Almost instinctively he grasped the secret of artistic expression, the great principle of Unity, the subjection of parts to the whole; and to-day we are the heirs of a splendid tradition of pictorial liberty and light handed down to the nineteenth century through Rubens and Watteau in the romantic, through Velasquez and Chardin in the realistic line of descent. The historical importance of Giorgione has been underestimated, because of the greater glory of Titian, and because the erudite critics of our scientific epoch have been busy challenging the authenticity of most of the few pictures he left us.

After Giorgione's death, in the early years of the sixteenth century, when Titian was still faithfully following the example of his revered comrade before developing his own more robust genius, when even the aged Giovanni Bellini, in his altar painting for the church of S. Maria Chrisostomo in Venice, abandoned his lifelong formality of style for the new romantic intimacy so successfully practised by his former pupil, when smaller men, not in Venice alone but over all Italy, paid Giorgione the tribute of imitation, and no collection of merchant prince or doge could be complete or self-respecting without an example of the lost leader's genius, it is not surprising that there should have been a lively sale of bogus Giorgiones, some of them school-pieces by pupils, others copies by contemporary craftsmen. When the science of the modern scholar and connoisseur was directed to this state of affairs a rigid investigation was conducted. Unfortunately Giorgione seldom signed his canvases and there are few existing manuscripts relating to his productions. From such contemporary writers as Vasari we learn of his general characteristics as a man and as an artist; of his love of pleasure and music, of the boldness of his imagination and technical invention, of his great influence over his associates. But no pictures are definitely described. Only four easel paintings can be positively authenticated, and of these, three were seen in Venice by a certain Anonimo (1525–1575)

and the fourth is the "Madonna and Saints" in the home church of San Liberale at Castelfranco. The critics therefore had a difficult task passing judgment upon the unsigned and unidentified pictures of obviously Giorgionesque character. Attempting to confine their attributions to works closely resembling the four acknowledged genuine, they overlooked the fact that they were dealing with the inventive genius of a bold initiator, who was ever seeking new worlds to conquer and rapidly shifting from one style and subject to another. The mistake that caused Crowe and Cavalcaselle to ascribe Giorgione's own pictures to his pupils was due to the fact that they did not fully comprehend the spirit of the man, and the mannerisms of his mind and hand. They merely studied and compared brush strokes and models heedless of two important facts, (1) that, in processes of restoration the original brushwork has vanished from the majority of old pictures, and (2) that Giorgione was constantly changing his models and passing them on to his contemporaries. Therefore the true criticism should pay more attention to the personal and technical peculiarities displayed in an old picture than to its mere substance or the present aspect of its surface. Through all his changing phases there is one spirit in the work of Giorgione, a spirit unlike any other in the history of art. Let us seek out that spirit and understand it. It will be our only safe clue.

The ten or twelve pictures which are now unchallenged and generally accepted as the work of Giorgione reveal the man's mind and the artist's technical peculiarities. In these pictures we find a wide diversity of subjects but a single prevailing spirit, in which is mingled a knight's love of strong men and fair women, a poet's fondness for dreamy moods detached from the indifferent world, and a painter's passion for colour and for light and shade. There are never any jarring notes, the taste is always exquisite, the colours harmonious, the drawing arbitrary but emotionally expressive. From his very earliest pictures the little biblical romances that glow, one on each side of Bellini's exquisite allegory at the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, we may miss the distinction of feeling and the scrupulous expression of only the significant forms which we come to expect from the mature Giorgione. But the delight in colour is already apparent and the taste for delicate combinations of tints. There is also evidence in these boyish pictures of at least a dormant instinct for unity of effect. Walter Pater pointed out that two impressions must have been stamped on the sensitive plate of Leonardo's brain in childhood, the smiling of women and the undercurrent of streams. Of Giorgione he might have hazarded another flash of thought; that in his early years he learned to love the magic of evening light and the gleam of polished and reflecting surfaces such as marble,

armour and still water. In these precocious achievements, too, we apprehend amid the immaturities and technical imperfections the force of a genius eager for innovation. In Bellini's allegory of the Tree of Life the landscape is more important than the figures. The pupil only needed this example to inspire him to further emancipation from the restraints of tradition. He selected biblical episodes that could be treated with romantic fervour. Instead of the constrained presence of Bellini's compulsory saints we behold a fascinating glimpse of the brilliant country life of the Quattrocento.

Other Italian and Flemish painters before Giorgione had looked to the many-sided, many-coloured life about them for their pictorial representations, but never with a thought of making landscape and light, colour and form, symbolically expressive of personal emotions. When in looking at a beautiful thing our pleasure is for the first time stimulated, less by interest in the object itself than by our impression of its beauty, then we have passed from the merely receptive to the appreciative stage of observation. Our eyes mean something to the world because the visible world means something to us. We have developed taste. We have begun to discriminate. It is only when a painter is endowed with at least a measure of this appreciative point of view that his creation can be called a work of art. The significant thing about Giorgione is that his

influence seems to represent in the history of painting just what this awakening to beauty means in the life of the individual. The Romantic Idyll which he introduced and which served his lifelong purpose of self-expression created a new epoch in pictures. In the palace of Prince Giovanelli at Venice hangs one of the most epoch-making of these idylls. Although an early work it shows an amazing mastery of technique and glows with such realistic light and such fresh jewelled pigments of crimson, silver, and green that it is difficult to believe in its antiquity. Recently an attempt has been made to find a story in the scene depicted. It is, however, my firm belief that Giorgione was impressionist enough to realize the futility of story-telling in pictures. His idylls are only situations and moods of mind. Here we stand sheltered in a shadowy corner of a quiet wood just as a summer storm makes its presence felt in a lightning flash and the leaves are all a-quiver with a rush of sultry air. But undisturbed by the wind or the threat of rain, in this dim retreat a young woman nurses her babe while the father stands on guard. One feels like an intruder so tender and so intimate is the chord of domestic sentiment.

That delightful critic of Italian painting Mr. Berenson has pointed out that Giorgione's tremendous vogue, a passion that created a voracious demand for the Giorgionesque article, was the natural consequence of a subconscious craving

among the Venetians for pleasurable easel pictures to adorn their homes. Giorgione anticipated their desire and at the same time awakened them to the full sense of their need and satisfied it. At the age of seventeen he conceived the idea of representing country parties in Venetia under the guise of representing biblical episodes. Soon the bible was abandoned for classic legends from Ovid and Statius and finally a rustic idyll was unhesitatingly offered to the public without any literary association whatever. The landscape backgrounds became popular and important. In them nature was no less idealized than human nature in the portraits. Both were made to yield romantic illusions, pleasurable sensations, a quickened love for the beauty of the world. Thus we find Titian practically repeating the landscape of Giorgione's "Venus" for his own "Noli me Tangere" of the National Gallery in London. The same mellow light falls across the thatched eaves of the same farm buildings in the middle distance, and in the same luminous, low-lying valley fall the same cloud shadows. But the magic of the "Venus" is the treatment of line, not only in the long drawn undulations of the beautiful body, but of the hills and fields far far away. I can think of no picture in the world so fully in accord with the old Greek ideal for representative art; an art devoted to serenity of spirit and to the selfsufficiency of grace.

Serenity, however, is not the only mood for

which this poet painter divined the symbol of expression. There are two landscape panels in the Gallery of Padua which made me catch my breath with delight. The sunset reflections upon the skies and tree-trunks, the sparkling freshness and bosky luxuriance of the forest trees, the almost fragrant suggestion of atmosphere and misty distances, all spoke eloquently to me of Giorgione's genius. The figures are extravagant and crude. Unquestionably they were done by inferior craftsmen. It would be in just such commissions as these panels for wooden chests that the master would give his pupils their chance. The subjects, too, are incomprehensible. Yet in one picture I seemed to feel a unity of sentiment. The apparent agitation of the people moving wildly through a lurid light seemed to hint at deeds dark and strange. It is that hushed half-hour when as the night descends mystery flits in and out and anything might happen. The background is the picture and yet remains emphatically a background. The mind may play with it as it wills. Only the chosen strain of a certain indefinite glamour is suggested. It is just this emphasis upon the background, this new importance attached to the mise en scène that constitutes the character of romanticism in art. The romancer is troubled by no scruples in decorating the truth with a mosaic of colours and an arabesque of lines that at least symbolize the haunting pattern of his own dream.

It is his purpose not to instruct the mind and elevate the spirit but to delight both mind and spirit through the senses. If he finds romantic material for his fancy in the visible world so much the better for him. If not, then he will close his eyes and tell himself fairy tales. Now-a-days we know the romance of reality. Nature has come into her own, and landscape is no longer merely a tapestry background imbued with romantic suggestion. By uniting their impressions of glamour and truth, Corot with lyric grace and Millet with epic force have sung the union of nature and the heart of man, employing the most familiar of observations and the most truth-telling of methods. This unity of mood or emotion applied to realism has only come in our age of science. But four centuries ago in Venice Giorgione knew how to express unity of romantic effect. Four centuries ago he laid the foundation for all that is personal and therefore vital in modern painting.

One does not think of Giorgione as a spiritual artist. Across our minds he seems to pass like a gallant adventurous youth out of Venetian legend. And yet his two madonnas of Castelfranco and Madrid have stirred me not only with their beauty but with a certain moral sanity and sweetness. In these two altar paintings Giorgione mastered the problem of how to make a subject, long hackneyed and conventionalized by tradition, yield fresh interest and inspiration. He

realized that the madonna motif provided the artist with one of the supreme opportunities of pictorial expression. Unlike Titian, Giorgione was not merely a lover of life and of earthly beauty but a genuinely spiritual man. His nature was passionate but also tender, gaily romantic but also deeply reverential. To these madonnas, therefore, he brought a serious mind and a sympathetic, if not a pious spirit. Had the real beauty of the theme been popularly recognized as the beauty of universal motherhood it could have yielded him an infinite variety of æsthetic emotions and left his fancy free to soar. As it was, the symbolical formula for the subject, dictated by the church for the purpose of propagating a favorite dogma, was gladly accepted by this great artist. His aim was to make the unreality of the composition not only symbolical but decorative; in other words, to express the spiritual beauty by means of æsthetic beauty, evoking the mood of lofty thought by the grace and sweetness of the design and the almost musical harmony of the colours. In the painting at Castelfranco, the artist invented a triangular composition, seating the madonna on a high throne, a young warrior in full armour on her right, a cowled and tonsured monk on her left. These figures represent St. Francis and St. Liberale, but they mean more than that. They mean that Christianity depends upon the knight errant as well as upon the cloistered man of prayer and peace. And the madonna is not

merely the mother of Christ. She is the mother of men, the embodied ideal of man's tenderest reverence. I like to think that for this blessed image Giorgione painted the features of the woman that he loved. The background is a landscape of exquisite simplicity, transfigured by a mellow, tranquil light, as of early morning. This sentiment of nature, radiant with fresh life and hope, has caused these people to withdraw, not in sadness, but in fullness of joy, into the sanctuary of their own thoughts. Again in the unfinished but beautiful picture at Madrid, the mother is pensive, the saints day-dreaming.

Too much emphasis can scarcely be laid upon the singularly formative influence of Giorgione's spirit. His romantic symphonies of colour and of chiaroscuro together with the best pictures of his followers and Titian's glorious "Bacchanals" have undoubtedly exerted a wider influence upon modern imagination in painting than any other pictures ever painted. They remain moreover the last word in pure romanticism, greater than the magnificent improvisations of Rubens, the delicate reveries of Watteau, the dramatic visions of Delacroix, the operatic scenery of Böcklin, and the fading fairyland of Matthew Maris. In their most subjective moods the poetic realists Corot, Inness and Whistler come nearest to the spirit of the Giorgionesque idyll. Whistler's portraits, in spite of their Spanish and Japanese pedigree, have something of Venetian chivalry

and romantic charm. But it was the noble mind of Watts that seriously conceived the thought of reviving the emotional portraiture of Giorgione and of Titian's Giorgionesque period. These Old Masters did not merely record facts. They revealed moods. They fathomed thoughts. Giorgione loved to paint eyes that gaze at us without seeing, eyes that are looking back to some faint memory or forward to some beautiful dream. Morelli suggested that the melancholy Antonio Brocardo at Budapest seems ready to confess to us the secret of his life. Giorgione was certainly intent upon the introspective character of his sitter, and it must have been in a mood of deep insight into the grief that does not speak that he conceived this face and hand so poignantly expressive of a troubled spirit craving sympathy. The kinship of these Venetian portraits to the portraits of Watts in London must be apparent to all serious students. Look, for example, at Swinburne in his pathetic neo-pagan youth, with his earth-red hair and sea-blue eyes, all sensibility and yearning. The spirit of Giorgione is in that picture.

Morelli startled lovers of art by questioning Giorgione's authorship of the famous "Concert" of the Pitti Palace, Florence, and ascribing it, on his own initiative, to Titian. Berenson, Claude Phillips and other authorities now agree with him. Yet in what picture of Titian's, may I ask, was ever such feeling as this displayed? The men portrayed by Titian, with the single

A CONCERT
By Giorgione

exception of the Dr. Parma, are self-contained and reserved as in life — not surprised in unguarded moments of intimate emotion. The inner life was Giorgione's particular field of study. His pupils could imitate his chosen subjects, as with creative ardour he took them up, one by one. But his spirit they never could approach. It is this which is the touchstone — the final test of what may be accepted as genuinely the conception of his brain. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, in taking "The Concert" as the Giorgionesque standard and formulating their mould of the man's mind and method in accordance with it, were nearer the truth than the usually more dependable Morelli, who was (I believe) led astray by a supposed resemblance of jaw bones, hands and ears to certain other jaw bones, hands and ears done by Titian. The technique is most emphatically Giorgione's, the triangular building up of the lines, the arbitrary glow on the faces, the favourite colour chord of black, orange and gleaming white. But the most positive evidence of the earlier master's authorship is the emotional rapture of the music mood. This picture might be named "The Mood of Music," that language which, saying nothing, means so much, steeping spirit and sense in a drowsy spell where thought may wander where it will provided it pass through the Dreamland Gate. It was Carlisle who said that "Music leads us to the edge of the Infinite to let us, for moments, gaze."

Ah yes, it is only for moments. And here in this picture the great young poet-painter has revealed the pathos of that moment, when, as the last chord dies away, the dream of the music lingers a little wistfully in the eyes. The sweet, low harmony has stilled the clacking tongue of the young worldling with the plume, and now behold him sobered in the presence of beauty. But what a contrast in quality the other faces! The older priest has ceased to play his viol and at the closing strains of the clavichord he has touched the shoulder of his friend to suggest perhaps some new selection. But his eyes are held with sudden and respectful wonder as he beholds in the face that is half turned to him a light of more than inspiration, almost of secret knowledge, as if indeed this man had stood on the edge of the Infinite just for a moment. It may be interpreted as spiritual ecstasy, or as unsatisfied longing, or as unspoken passion — the intensity of feeling that has made this young monk's face so eloquent. But whatever it is, Giorgione has drawn it forth from its retreat. A golden light has come into the dark room and cast its glow over these music-makers. It is a light that fails to pierce the surrounding blackness, an unearthly light shining only where it wills, from an inner source. Such is the light of self-revelation. Only in those rare moments may we know it, when the soul is stirred out of its lethargy, when the swift, strong current of its

own thrill fuses a flashing vision in the eyes. Here then we have a painting that so far abandons the conventionality of contemporary subjects as to depict an uneventful moment in any life, when the inner consciousness romantically responds to an evanescent influence of beauty from without; when that beauty is so frail and fugitive a thing that it lingers only on the instant of suspended sound — to leave the soul in another instant — only a little richer for the memory.

But the masterpiece, the culmination of Giorgione's art, is "The Pastoral Symphony" of the Louvre. Denied him by Crowe and Cavalcaselle because the forms were held to be of too free and coarse a type, Morelli has restored the glorious pastoral to Giorgione and all critics are now glad to agree. It is true that the figures of the women lack the grace and refined feeling of Giorgione's earlier nudes. It is also true that Sebastiano del Piombo enjoyed just such robust peasant types of beauty, and that the faces and golden-brown flesh tones resemble his Giorgionesque period. I consider it, therefore, possible that this picture, perhaps the last work of the master, was left unfinished at his death, and was completed by Sebastiano according to the master's original intention. Certainly, the romantic conception, the luxurious color, the inspired landscape, and the intricate design, are not only the work of Giorgione beyond the shadow of a doubt, but represent the very climax of his achievement.

On this pleasant upland, this soft Italian hillside, the massy verdure of the forest trees seems interwoven, as Pater imagined, with gold thread. And the long-lingering sunshine seems to mellow the very grass and soil to a luxury of warm tones: green, straw-color and golden brown. At a marble fountain a wood nymph of amber flesh and languorous charms pours water into a basin, listening drowsily to its tinkling fall as the sound of it mingles with the sound of lutes and viols, that the crimson-clad young gentlemen of Venice are wafting upon the golden air, "in profuse strains of unpremeditated art." This is the Land of Make-Believe, eternally young and wilfully fantastic with the spirit of romantic comedy. And in the last analysis, this land was the dream of Giorgione's short and brilliant life — the goal of his æsthetic aspiration. For here at last the poet-painter found, for the strange, sweet spirit that had haunted his every conception, a pictorial symbol as meaningless and as exquisite as the dream of life itself from which he never wished to wake. A lover of music and of colour, he beheld a vision of the very mind of music, and, while within its trance, he composed a symphony upon the very soul of colour. Come to my earthly paradise — he seems to say; to a land "where the air is always balmy and the forest ever green; where life is but a pastime and music the only labour. Come to my golden land and feast upon beauty, where the richness of

tones that thrilled you once for a moment shall be your portion all the day; and the dreams you once yearned to hold shall soothe you into forgetting that there is any such thing as passion or any such thing as pain."

I have said that "The Pastoral Symphony" of the Louvre may be regarded as a perfect expression of Giorgione's spirit. It is even more significant than that. It represents the æsthetic ideal and reflects the philosophic temper of the great Venetian Renaissance from which we have derived the personal impressionism of modern art. Contrast this pastoral with characteristic masterpieces of Florentine painting at the same period — with a madonna by Raphael and a portrait by Leonardo. Raphael's "Madonna" is a thing of grace, as learned, as accomplished, as devoid of individual emotion, as a fine Greek marble. It is a creation of perfect equipment and proportion, proceeding from a wide culture and a faultless sense of balance. It is an eclectic assemblage of very noble design, and colour, and sentiment, and subject. But no ardour of imagination has gone into its making. No interest in the visible world has made it realistic. No pious revery nor other-worldly dream has made it, in any genuine sense, religious. No intimation of the elusive glamour that pervades both fancy and fact has made it, for so much as one bright moment, romantic. It is a triumph of hand and eye, but as tenantless of flesh and blood as a slab of

mortuary marble. Leonardo's "Portrait," on the other hand, reveals a creator so fascinated by both body and soul, so sensitive to the absorbing interest of reality and the elusive glamour of romance, that in a fever of experiment, his too intricate genius and too learned love of life have stimulated the intellect but only baffled and dissatisfied the sense of sight, to which all pictures must primarily appeal.

Turning back then from either Raphael's Madonna or Leonardo's "Portrait" to Giorgione's "Pastoral," we pass out of the doors of Mind, out of the temple of Thought, into the sunbathed, wind-stirred splendour of the woods and fields in summer. At once we are conscious of the beauties of the earth and, in the very act of appreciation, we become aware of our own mysteriously sentient personalities, of the surging emotions within us which alone can make the beauties of the earth worthwhile. It is with this individual perception of beauty that the painter has to do. Seeking to perpetuate the thrilling pleasure of a moment's visual impression—he seeks to create a synthesis or unity of expression. The Venetians of the sixteenth century were the first painters to really comprehend the scope of pictorial art, and Giorgione, in his important work of inspiring and inaugurating this new birth of æsthetic understanding was the first modern master of the art of painting.

XIV

TINTORETTO

AT his worst Tintoretto was one of the most misguided and unsuccessful of the Old Masters of painting. His mind was too full of conceptions that were quite beyond the scope of pictorial art. Out of the fire and fury of his imagination he created a chaos of coarsely coloured forms and a bewilderment of things supernaturally seen and done. And yet, at his best, he was one of the most wonderful painters that ever lived and if he had even succeeded half of the time in achieving his exalted aim he would doubtless be regarded to-day as the greatest of the great. It was his ambition to present the dramatic visions of his dreams with the power of Michelangelo and the charm of Titian. Angelo's modelling of the human body would lend him the intensity of emotional action needful to the climaxes that his brain conceived, and Titian's colour would supply him with the required grandeur of background and beauty of speech. Only once did he achieve his aim. Usually he fell far short of Titian in charm and of Angelo in power, although he surpassed them both in imagination and creative ardour. The greatness of Tintoretto's genius in a few pictures is beyond dis-

pute. His colour in these masterpieces seemed imbued with identically the emotion of the scenes depicted, and his modelling was by means of light and shade which he either employed plastically for realizing objects in the round — thus anticipating Velasquez — or arbitrarily for dramatic effect, — thus anticipating Rembrandt. From the majority of his canvases, however, we turn away in sadness, much impressed by the learning and the feeling of the man but baffled by his faults of taste and the incoherent complexities of his themes.

With Tintoretto subject was of supreme importance. Giorgione and Titian — yes, and even Bellini before them — although they were the very men who created the romantic spirit in painting, cared more for style than for subject, expounding for the first time the doctrine of art for art's sake. But in those days art was understood to imply beauty, and technical beauty was considered essential to beauty of subject. By technical beauty I do not mean mere dexterity and skill of handling, but charm of surface, charm in the very textures of canvas and pigment. What is it but sheer decorative beauty that stirs us in Bellini's great "Madonna of the Frari," Venice? The design is according to the stiff, expressionless Byzantine model of the Venetian primitives. Yet the rich, deep colours glow like jewels in cathedral light, and the conventional altar-piece is a thing of decorative magic. Now

Tintoretto was a facile brushman, and he understood all about colour and chiaroscuro. But his mind was, in a sense, more literary than pictorial. He was chiefly absorbed in representing his impetuous dream-visions, and the materials he chose were often snatched up in such haste that sometimes we marvel at his immediate mastery, but more often at his deplorable carelessness. It was the subject Tintoretto thought of first of all, and if, in his best pictures the technical beauty seems faultless, we feel that it was only so by the happy accident of his spontaneous inspiration.

Tintoretto might have written great drama. He was the most dramatic of painters. He did not merely set the stage like Claude and Turner and Böcklin. He enacted the play. His every figure was made to act its part. He could present a romantic comedy like the "Venus Driving away Mars" or he could succeed with a sublime tragedy like the "Crucifixion." Mr. Berenson remarked of the famous picture in the Scuola di San Rocco that it was full of the impassioned naturalism of a novel by Tolstoi. "Christ is on the Cross but life does not stop. Many of the people gathered on Calvary are attending to their various duties as if it were only a common execution. But all the while we are made to feel, with those few stricken mourners, that we are witnessing the greatest event that ever took place." This impression is conveyed to us directly. In spite of his literary imagina-

tion, then, Tintoretto must be judged like other painters as an impressionist who appealed to the eye, at a glance, or not at all. When his dramas failed they failed miserably because the over-elaboration of the parts marred the instantaneous effect of the whole. When they succeeded they veritably triumphed because not only was everything said first of all to the eye, but everything was of profound interest and vital stimulus to the mind and the spirit as well. Every component part of the decoration seemed pervaded by the same inspiring spirit, the colour and design contributing to the thrill of whatever beautiful or breathless moment was depicted.

Light is the chief actor in most of Tintoretto's dramas. He caused it to play many rôles and invariably it was the means whereby the dramatist secured his desired effect. It is really true, as a great painter once said to me — that the modern belief in "light as the life of everything it touches" may be traced to the inspiring experiments of the great Venetian. He was modern in his mastery of foreshortening, perspective and modelling by the brush. But it was his careful study of all kinds of illumination and his power to evoke at will any of these schemes of light as the means for pictorially condensing his dramatic conceptions that he revealed his true greatness. In the "Marriage at Cana" of S. Maria della Salute, the deep perspective of the great banqueting hall is luminous with the diffusion of

mellow, comfortable daylight. The men are seated in shadow, their backs to the sun, which streams in across the table cover to fall full upon the charming row of women and girls. There is a pervading sense of pleasure and well-being. The sun is a guest at the feast and glad to shine in such good company. In the "Last Supper" of San Giorgio Maggiore, what a different spirit! Moonlight pours from above into the long dark room, dimly lit by a swinging lamp that smokes. High above the table — up among the rafters, a host of otherworldly visitants swoops in whirling flight. Meanwhile the disciples are eating, drinking, talking, all intensely excited by the supernatural forces, the presence of which they feel but do not as yet perceive. And the eye is focussed at once on the magnetic Christ, moving with nervous haste and passionate tenderness among his followers, serving and admonishing them for the last time. The mental agitation that is here so subtly suggested is given pictorial synthesis by the struggling of moonlight with the dim and gusty lamplight and the cloud of dense, mysterious darkness overhead. The canvas is now so black that only the thought remains. Yet the decorative imagination is still so potent as an emotional agency that the emotions are deeply stirred and the inclination to be hypercritical is put to sleep. The best preserved perhaps of Tintoretto's pictures is the "Venus Driving away Mars" of the Ducal Palace. Here

the decorative scheme is one of romantic glamour that soothes rather than excites the spirit. A lovely light that glows on the flesh of deliciously rounded arms and knees is in itself a serene and unpremeditated song of joy. And the design is one with the cool and radiant colours — a refreshment and an exhilaration. How supple and strong and at the same time sensitively feminine is the action of the enchanting Athene as she repels the advances of the insolent War God! There have been few finer tributes to the power of noble womanhood.

But Tintoretto's masterpiece — the greatest picture of the Venetian Renaissance is the "Miracle of St. Mark" at the Venice Academy. It is, if you will, a story-telling picture. But you do not need to know the story nor even the title to enjoy and understand the essentials. The scene explains itself, and at a glance. A thunderbolt in human form has descended from heaven and shattered the sword of the executioner just as his blow was about to fall. The crowd surges around him as he raises the broken fragments for the judge to see, calling upon all to witness that a miracle has taken place. Terrific is the moment's excitement. The sun shines with passionate glow, as only the sun can shine when the minds of men are intent upon the glow of their own passions. And the colours partake of the intense life of the moment. Each one is a separate thrill and all together, fused in golden air, they vibrate and

resound. Such is life's drama at its moments of climax. The particular incident is of comparative unimportance in relation to all that has been and all that will be. But for the space of a moment, to the actors in the scene, it is all in all. The mind has no time to think of consequences and significances. The eye has no time to note details. The emotions alone are in command. It is in such moments that a great painter like Tintoretto, smitten by a thunderbolt of spontaneous inspiration so as to himself partake of the imagined emotions, can even better present the moment, and all that it means, than the author whose words are without light and without colour and form. Endowed in this instance with a power of lighting, colouring, drawing, modelling, all employed for a single purpose of emotional expression, and executed apparently at lightning speed and with inspired economy of effort, Tintoretto's picture is indeed a miracle, but in no ecclesiastical sense. Rather is it a miracle of mood — the mood of decorative imagination — and a miracle of art — the art of personal impressionism.

XV

SHAKESPEARIAN BEAUTY

THE Irish dramatist, J. M. Synge, in the preface to his plays wrote the following significant lines upon the character of his own art: "Richness in modern literature is found chiefly in sonnets or prose poems or in one or two elaborate books (doubtless Walter Pater's) very far from the profound and common interests of life. On the stage one must have reality, but one must also have beauty, not Ibsen's and Zola's reality of joyless, pallid words. . . . In a good play, every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or an apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people that have shut their lips on poetry. Now in Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination, fiery and tender, so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten and the harvest is a memory only." It was certainly exceptional good fortune for Mr. Synge to find an untamed, unspoiled corner of his own land where the imagination of the people and the language they use remain so rich and living that it was possible for him, as dramatist of their life, to be

sumptuously copious in his words and thus able to express at once poetry and reality in a natural form uniquely compounded of both the decorative and the representative elements of his art. Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that all romance has gone out of reality, simply because most people have, in their daily speech "shut their lips on poetry" and become too grown-up and self conscious to retain their primitive sense of humour and of wonder, their rough, elemental eloquence of fancy and phrase. The *richness* which Synge sought for as the essential quality in drama, is not after all a strange beauty which can only be reflected in art when it is outwardly visible in life. It is a mood of mind, a potentiality of decorative imagination, a spirit of romantic comedy which all of us may keep fresh and fair in our own lives, provided that we are sufficiently young at heart to be unsatisfied with realities that are "joyless and pallid" and eager for the realities that are "rich and wild."

In the days of mediæval chivalry in Europe, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of Italy, in the Elizabethan Age of England, richness of spirit was a heritage of all the people and consequently these phases of the world's drama are vividly imagined. And yet the Elizabethans did not talk blank verse. In discussing their affairs and expressing their opinions they had "shut their lips on poetry" even as we have to-day. In converting the quite commonplace language of

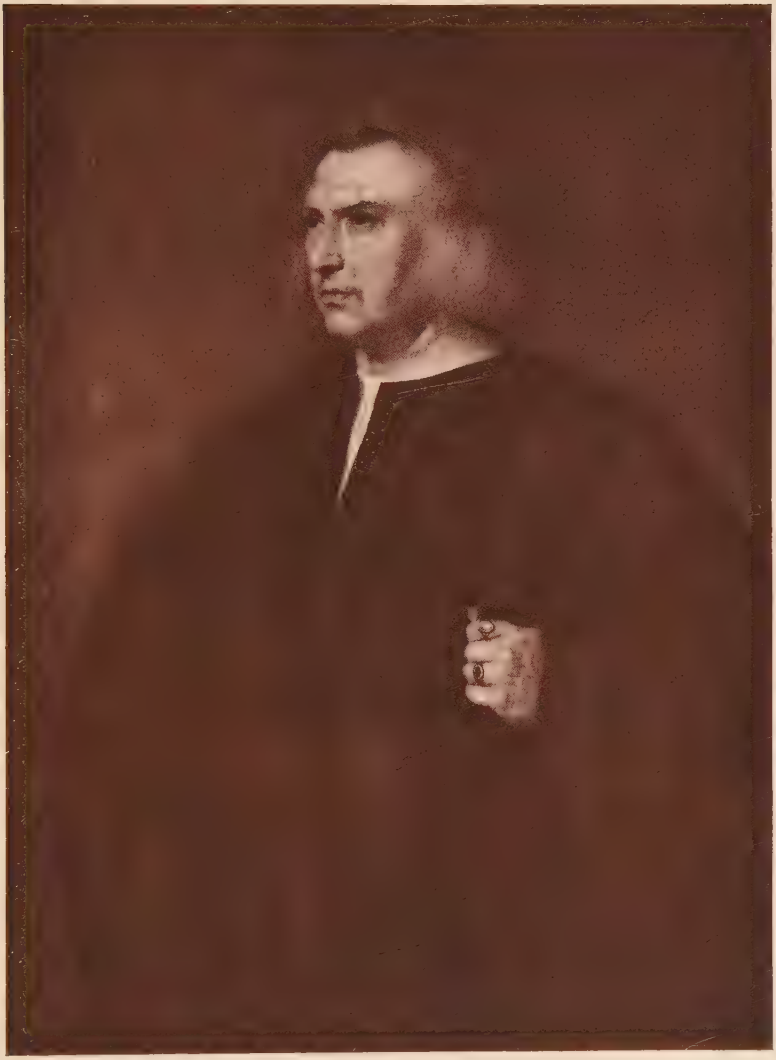
the street into rich and resounding rhythms for the theatre, Shakespeare did not for a moment believe that he was falsifying his expression of reality, but rather that he was expressing infinitely more than the average man was capable of expressing for himself. The Shakespearian philosophy did not think of art as synonomous with life nor as a substitute for it, but as something that is meant to celebrate it and enrich it, a magic to lift thought, speech and action beyond the level of every day. Shakespearian realism was not made to copy life but to interpret it; not essentially to report upon things as they are but upon things as they may be in the exceptional moments, as they *would* be if our personal tragedies were always moving to sublime and soul-satisfying climaxes, and if our romantic comedies were always as beautiful as our hearts desired. It was not merely the truth of life then that Shakespeare reflected in the mirror of his immortal dramas, but the intensity of its emotional experiences, the heights and depths of its dreams and aspirations, the contrasts of its colours, and the light and shade of its characters, the reality that is the foundation for all romance and the romance that is the significant part of all reality. The *richness* of life that Synge desired, is perhaps best described to those who love Shakespeare as Shakespearian. We do not need to discover, as did Mr. Synge, such wild corners of the earth as county Wicklow and the Aran Islands in order to

create it afresh. All we need to do is to try to live up to Shakespeare and his love of life as spectacle and story.

It is regarded as heresy now, and I suppose it always will be, to question Ben Jonson's prophecy that the genius of Shakespeare is not of any one age but for all time. Nevertheless it would be quite hypocritical to deny that we to-day have outgrown Shakespeare, having almost attained to the stature of G. Bernard Shaw. As a matter of fact, although humanity speaks through him now and forever, Shakespeare was pre-eminently a man of his own age — and race. He wrote for the Elizabethan stage, with as much regard for the local and topical interests as David Belasco for the seasonable thing on Broadway. His audiences wanted romance, and low comedy and historical tragedy, with plenty of courts and camps and kings and clowns. That his plays were works of matchless genius, only a few intimates like Ben Jonson could perceive. He was simply regarded as a successful playwright, the best perhaps of the scribblers who supplied the required theatrical entertainment. Shakespeare inaugurated no new epoch. Rather was he the culmination, not only of poetic drama in England, but of art in Europe. He was the climax of the æsthetic movement that began with painting and sculpture in Italy. But whereas the Italian genius best expressed its sense of life's romantic glamour in the plastic arts, the English

mind found its natural medium in poetry and drama. The Elizabethan Age is not to be regarded as an isolated wonder of creative achievement, but as a final and culminating phase of an international impulse towards Beauty, felt throughout civilized Europe when the enchantment of the Greeks was interpreted at last to the modern world through the ardours of the Italian Renaissance.

It was not the least of Shakespeare's achievements that, following the precedent of Marlowe, he adapted the inspiration of Southern sculpture and painting to Northern drama and poetry. In his efforts he was sustained by the triumphant British consciousness of world power and world influence. Just as in Italy, the divine fire of Michelangelo and of Titian was bestowed upon the people through the patronage and primarily to satisfy the desires of the ruling classes, so the Elizabethan drama was offered to the English public, but dedicated to and upheld by the aristocracy. What the dramatists of the period reflected most accurately was the life of great men and their ladies, the ideals of these proud people, their tastes, their temperaments. If art had always been democratic, we might never have known that Shakespearian beauty which was anticipated in principle, and partially formulated in practice, by the greater Venetian painters of the Quinquecento. The decorative imagination which made them great was the expression of



DOCTOR PARMA
By Titian

the mental life and philosophy of a breed of powerful men who believed in pride of place and in the survival of the fittest, men of rank, men of action, men of a world of daring deeds, high passions and cultivated tastes, men who really lived tragic romances and really relaxed themselves with interludes of pastoral comedy, men for whom life was full of thrilling adventures and æsthetic pleasures, full of hours vivid with intense emotions. Art then was required to be the expression either of fascinating human character, or of ideal dreamfulness. And so we have the romantic portraits and pastorals of Titian and of Shakespeare.

Titian's "Man with a Glove" at the Louvre, Paris, recalls many a young Shakespearian gentleman in the gentle revery of his eyes, the kindly but reserved dignity of his bearing. Shakespearian, too, is the handsome Englishman of the Pitti Palace, Florence, who gazes at us with vacant stare as if his thoughts were far away dreaming of a battle or a woman. And the Dr. Parma at Vienna — how the author of Hamlet would have delighted in his mingling of determination and irresolution! With clenched fist and frank, brave eyes, he seems to calculate the approach of a crisis. A momentous decision seems to hang in the balance. Shakespeare would have interpreted his thoughts. Titian left him there on canvas, pondering his problem, about to shape his destiny for better or worse.

But perhaps, of all Titian's portraits, the most Shakespearian in its full-blooded idealism, is the equestrian "Charles V" at the Prado, Madrid. The landscape backgrounds of all the Titians in this gallery were painted with the same lyrical enthusiasm which made Shakespeare's descriptions of scenery so decorative. The trees are gold or bronze or green, impenetrable in their shade or dappled by the sun, outlined against the sky or nestled in the valley, according to their creator's changing moods, but always the very sap and strength and bloom of the rich earth. And the drama of the clouds! great billowy bosomed clouds in the deep dark blue of the moving heaven, that adds its thrill to the thrilling Bacchanal; melancholy, sable-coloured clouds that lift a little in the twilight, just to leave a space of reflected glory in the sky to harmonize with the dull green tones of the shadowy river-valley and with the dusky armour and wine-dark trappings of the old World Shaker, as, grim and unconquered, he rides forth to another battle. Now Shakespeare's genius for portraiture had in it elements also of Rembrandt and of Hals. But whereas these Masters appeal to us by reason of qualities very emphatically their own, it is, I think, Titian's crowning glory to Anglo-Saxons, that his sense of the beautiful was "Shakespearian."

Shakespearian beauty is both objective and subjective, both dramatic and lyric, idealism

transcending reality, the individual experience justifying the personal philosophy and symbolizing the universal spectacle. Life itself for Shakespeare was a drama, a show upon which he could comment from his unseen position in the wings. But for all his apparent absorption in the words and deeds of others, for all his detachment from his own stories, he was usually out upon the stage expressing through one character or another, one mood or another of his own mind, and indulging his own desire for a selected problem of thought or play of fancy. Being a true Elizabethan, in other words, a vigorous English offshoot of the European Renaissance, he worshipped efficiency and idolized men of action. Yet there is good reason to believe that he himself was no such man. To be sure we have been told that his habits were practical and thrifty. But what we know of his outer life from meagre records, is very little when compared to what we know of his inner life from his dramas. Behind the supposedly biographical sonnets, lurks a vague and unpleasant personality, which is surely a delusion. But in the supposedly impersonal plays, cannot we find the real Shakespeare most vividly revealed? Was he not, in contrasting one type of character with another, confessing what he was and what he might have been, or would have liked to be? Was there not a good deal of that passion-swept sentimentalist Romeo in his own temperament, in spite of the debonair,

devil-may-care philosophy of Mercutio, which he so admired? Was he not capable, like Jaques, of being melancholy amid wholesome country joys, cultivating a perverse luxury of mood in spite of his enjoyment of the way a Touchstone's burlesque could shame his affectation? Was he not emulous of the strong and steadfast Horatio, being himself Hamlet, that ineffectual drifter with the tides of thought, that sweet dreamer of profound dreams, bewildered by a world of ill-considered action? Was he not, most of all, that master of enchantment, Prospero, with his child of art on his lonely island, attended by servants of earth and air, of sense and spirit, Nature yielding him at the last her innermost secrets? To me at least it seems that the man Shakespeare is a composite of these characters of his own creation. And the Shakespearian world, it is our real world dramatized with infinite truth but enlarged and intensified beyond mere powers of observation through a witchery of decorative imagination, and through a very lyrical self-expression.

But, however disputable my contention that there is a vein of personal sentiment and philosophy underlying Shakespeare's profound studies of character, we must all recognize the lyrical quality of "decorative imagination" which the dramatist deliberately put on like a costume when he refreshed himself with the composition of a fantastic farce or a romantic comedy. These lyrical plays are not true to life. They contain

instead of deep thought, thistle-down fancy, instead of subtle sense, the most irresponsible nonsense. Occasionally in the tragedies Shakespeare introduced scenes and characters of low comedy. These were intended not only as a relief from the tension of profound emotions, but also in order to accentuate the life likeness. In real life we all know the jangling of the sublime and the ridiculous. Protected by his own fine sense of fitness and proportion, Shakespeare's comic digressions were actually made to contribute to the tonal scheme of tragic plays. Polonius, for instance, gives Hamlet splendid opportunity for puncturing the bladder of worldly wisdom and the First Grave Digger adds just that gargoyle of leering familiarity with Death which reveals by contrast the spiritual beauty of Hamlet's sensitive soul. But such a farce as "The Taming of the Shrew" and such a pastoral as "As you Like it" are unashamed to be sublimely ridiculous and ridiculously sublime. A dramatist takes the same delight in providing good action or "stage business" as the painter in his brushwork of "handling." When acted by such a master of the fantastic as Otis Skinner, Petruchio, the benevolent bully, is a positively exhilarating person to watch, just as it is exhilarating to mark the incisive sabre-strokes of that Petruchio of painting, Frans Hals, in his genial introduction of a "Laughing Cavalier." As for Touchstone, I dote upon

that precious fool. He burlesques the pessimism of Jaques, and Jaques, overhearing, chuckles "for an hour by the dial" "that fools should be so deep contemplative" as to catch him grinning behind his melancholy mask. And so he is "ambitious for a motley coat" invested with which he would "purge the foul body of the infected world." When the philosopher exclaims "Motley's the only wear," it is not only Jaques, but Shakespeare himself who is speaking. In other delicious scenes Touchstone, to his own boundless delight, parodies the contagion of love-sickness that overtakes everyone in the enchanted forest where "'neath the shade of melancholy boughs" the hours are only measured by contentment and by whimsical fanciful idleness.

Shakespeare's romantic comedies are the perfection of lyrical and they are the perfection of pictorial dramas. It is the underlying function of expressing a single idea or emotion, and of producing a single tonality of effect, that makes all good pictures and all good lyrics impressionistic, and in this sense "As you Like it" and "Twelfth Night" and "Much Ado about Nothing" are the earliest triumphs of literary impressionism. These dreams of young love and nonsense and mellow calm philosophy, with their backgrounds of sun-flecked forest depths and moonlit palace gardens, are of the same stuff that songs and pictures are made of. They express single moods by means of blended harmonies of

sense and sight and sound. We moderns would dispense with a good many scenes of inferior quality and thereby emphasize the beauty of the whole. But we must remember that Shakespeare was writing for an amusement-seeking crowd which was not yet aware of the æsthetic value of synthesis. It is all the more eloquent of the lyrical unity of mood and the decorative harmony of tone, that in the best of Shakespearian performances these essential qualities have their way with us in spite of the many imperfections, leaving upon our minds exactly the sense of beauty induced by the master's art at its most perfect moment:

"Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither."

Come to the glowing heart of Nature to hear it pulsing, where we who are lovers may have our fill of the fond familiar sentiment, and we who are jesters may laugh the hours away and from sheer gladness of heart, and we who are athletes may delight in sports that test us, and we who are musical may sing in chorus till the woods resound, and we who have seen too much and thought too much and grown a-weary with overmuch experience, may indulge ourselves with sad philosophy, secretly glad that on a summer's day life is so simple and so sweet. Passions at

rest, cares that we may forget, entertainment and colour and music and sentiment for us all, each As We Like It — surely out of his largess the Enchanter has created a Land of Heart's Desire.

Essentially then Shakespeare's romantic comedies were pictorial and musical. Not only did his moods put on colour and form but they also burst into rhythm and melody. The stories were charming in their way, but they were never seriously considered; in no sense the significant part of the creations. For the dramatist's own estimate of their relative unimportance recall the titles, "As you Like it," "Twelfth Night" or "As you Will," "Much Ado about Nothing." The fact was that Shakespeare usually built the framework for his treasures of decorative imagination out of the incidents and situations he found in trashy English poems and Italian novels. Sentiment on the other hand was, in his romantic comedies, the one thing of supreme importance. But it was a sentiment compounded of (1) a delight in the character of concrete images, lovely or grotesque; in short, a pictorial sentiment, and (2) a delight in yielding to the impulse of song; in other words a natural birdlike sort of a sentiment. And these delights were really identical. The songs are pictures, vividly sketching for us the greenwood tree at the heart of summer or the fairy couching in the cowslip's bell. So also are the pictures musical. The closing garden scene of "The Merchant of

Venice" enthralls our senses with this double charm. When Lorenzo whispers to his Jessica:

"How sweet the moonlight *sleeps* upon this bank,"

we do not need the chemical and mechanical illusions of modern stagecraft to create the magic atmosphere for a night of love. The picture is flashed to us in a phrase — a quality of genius that anticipates the modern word-painting of Stevenson, Meredith and James. When Lorenzo sighs for the wafted harmonies that the night air breathes, we do not need any orchestral accompaniment of low music. There is all we need of music, and all we can bear of moonlight in the harmony of his own words.

It is, however, the glory of Shakespeare's plays that although they may be in spirit poems and pictures, they remain in substance fundamentally and unmistakably plays. The trouble with contemporary drama is its inability to be both dramatic and lyrical. If it is our luck to discover a play that is truly dramatic, it will be insufficiently lyrical, and, if lyrical, then insufficiently dramatic. The romantic dramas of W. B. Yeats are to a certain extent Shakespearian in that they are at once musical, pictorial and cast in a dramatic mould. But Yeats is a symbolist which Shakespeare never was. If we read "The Land of Heart's Desire" with a receptive mind, putting ourselves in sympathy with an untaught, imaginative people for whom Elfland is never far away, even as Shakespeare did when

he created Puck for the Elizabethan public, we will be deeply impressed with just the emotions the poet wished to rouse. We will be haunted by visions of Irish faces round the fire, and autumn winds without, of silver starlit streams and the dance of the white feet of fairies. But there is no solid foundation in such a play, as even the most fantastic of Shakespeare's dreams may rest upon. It is not the romance of life's reality which we feel but just the reality of the romantic spirit in the mind of Mr. Yeats.

Far otherwise it is with the dramatic tone poems of J. M. Synge, a man whose conception of art was thoroughly Shakespearian. Synge tells us that he wrote down nothing that he had not actually heard the Irish peasants say. It was his art to recognize the dramatic and æsthetic opportunities that came to his hand and to select and emphasize them by means of his decorative imagination. A recent biographer has written of Synge that "art for him was always an expression of life, but not keyed down to the low pitch convenient for those who live in the narrow streets of civilization, rather of life superb and wild. He would have approved of Gissing's definition of art as "the expression of the *zest* of living," the quality which nourishes the imagination by giving it food richer than the fare of ordinary experience." One has always imagined Shakespeare going attentively about Stratford or the streets of London taking notes, here of a

striking phase, there of a salient trait of character, sufficiently vivid for the emphatic life of the stage. To-day the stuff of drama is not so ready at hand as it was in Shakespeare's time. Our vitality seems lower; we are prone to think about life instead of living it, so that artists are inclined to deal with special problems rather than with life, just as spectacle or story. Then too, our language has deteriorated. The rift has widened between literature and talk. And so Synge had to go to the Aran Islands and to Connemara and Wicklow in order to find that impulsive eloquence and elemental frankness which he thought essential to the drama which may combine reality and romance. One must turn back to the great scene where the afflicted Lear and his dear Fool suffer together on the storm-swept heath for analogy to the poignant pathos of Synge's "Riders to the Sea." In the pitiful calm that comes with the completion of her anguish, the old mother of lost fishermen attains to that terrible lone summit above the storms of fate where it feels good to watch and worry and weep no more. Love is a torment. "Sure and no man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied." The fatalism of the pagan world is in this tragedy and a certain *richness* of colour too, curiously *wrought out of darkness* by sheer decorative imagination. For the romance of reality may be found in its most undeniable manifestation in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Big as it was in conception and execution, the theme of uncivilized Ireland was too narrow to yield Synge perpetual inspiration. Before he died, he had turned his thoughts to the retelling of old Gaelic tales, and sooner or later he would have returned to the modernity of which he was so interesting a part, refreshed for new apprehensions of the richness that exists even in modern city life if eyes know how to see. Perhaps the most Shakespearian of living poets is Alfred Noyes. His latest volume is entitled "Tales of The Mermaid Tavern." Walking down Fleet Street in a sunset fog, which makes grey London glow like a "huge cobwebbed flagon of old wine," he suddenly remembers that three hundred years ago he was a call boy at The Mermaid when Shakespeare, Jonson and Marlowe were revelling in its rooms. Mr. Noyes is a true enough Elizabethan at heart to re-create the age very vividly. Noyes has just the instinctive quality of song which so refreshes us in the Elizabethan song books and in Herrick's "Hesperides." On a May morning, just at daybreak a rout of morrice-dancers come gambolling Eastcheape way and skip with frolic feet into the Mermaid Tavern. There is a Fool jingling his bells, and bouncing his bladder. For every Robin Hood there is a Marian, "coloured like the dawn and fragrant of the greenwood whence she came." Of course the merry company order their tankards of nut brown ale and their tarts with

clotted cream and then the Fool relates how, with a barefoot milk-maid, he danced a-down a country lane thrilling to the adventure. At last away they go to another place where, on May-day morn, they hold high revel, and as they vanish we hear their lusty voices:

"Out of the woods we dance and sing
Under the morning star of Spring,
Into the town with our fresh boughs,
And knock on every sleeping house.
Not sighing and crying
Though love knows no denying,
Then round your summer Queen and King
Dance, young lovers, dance and sing,
Dance and sing."

Now this sort of thing must be well done, if done at all. An inferior poet will invariably make the mistake of attempting to imitate the very letter of an old time literary style instead of being content to suggest its general effect on a receptive mind. The boy, Chatterton, laboriously imitated the script on the crinkly yellow parchment he found in an old chest, hoping that by familiarizing himself with its archaic substance he might produce on his own account something of that Gothic richness which his imagination craved. The result of his efforts was futile and in the end tragic. Now Keats was deeply moved by a kindred impulse to express the romantic richness, but he did not attempt to reproduce Gothic materials but to create once more the

thrill of Gothic glamour putting himself into the spirit of middle-age romance, even as Shakespeare had assumed the spirit of Caesar's Rome and Falstaff's London and Shylock's Rialto. Alfred Noyes, in his songs and pictures of the Mermaid Tavern, inherits the detached Shakespearian appreciation of the richness of effect obtainable by means of the mind's backward visioning. Yet he knows too that, however congenial it may be in the pleasant modern fashion to be a "hoarder of old lore," a "gleaner after time," the decorative impulse in the heart of man is no more concerned with the long ago than with the here and now. It is obeying this decorative impulse that the imagination goes high-hearted on its way, loving life all the better for cherishing its own inward existence. Mr. Noyes' poem "The Barrel Organ" expresses the glimmering consciousness of this dream-quality in the minds and hearts of all sorts of people on London's busiest streets. It is spring. The hurdy-gurdy rolls forth a succession of good old melodies made sweet by association. Who of us can resist the vague stirring, the swift sharp calling of the spirit of song in lilac time? I am reminded of Austin Dobson's "Ballade of Prose and Rhyme":

"When the brain gets dry as an empty nut,
When the reason stands on its squarest toes,
When the mind, like the beard, has a formal cut,
There is place and enough for the pains of prose.
But whenever the May-blood stirs and glows

And the young year draws to its golden prime,
And Sir Romeo sticks in his ear a rose,
Then hey for the ripple of laughing rhyme.

In a theme where the thoughts have a pedant strut
In a changing quarrel of ayes and noes,
In a starched procession of If and But,
There is place and enough for the pains of prose.
But whenever a soft glance softer grows,
And the light hours dance to the trysting time
And the secret is told that no one knows,
Then hey for the ripple of laughing rhyme."

Now, Mr. Dobson did not mean literally Prose and Rhyme, but the spirit of Common Sense, as opposed to the spirit of Decorative Imagination; the regard for the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing *but* the Truth, as opposed to the craving only for the Beauty of Truth; the pallid and joyless reality of Ibsen as opposed to the sumptuous reality of Shakespeare. When we come upon pictures that seem to sing to us, and yet remain true to the laws of pictures, and lyrics that seem to paint for us pictures, although remaining true to the laws of language, then we meet Shakespearian beauty and partake of that *enchantment* that is not just life haphazard, but the flower of life, the finest moments of experience, the colour, or music, or philosophy, that is, in itself, *emotion*.

XVI

WATTEAU AND HIS INFLUENCE ON MODERN POETRY

WHETHER we like it or not we must all agree that the art of the eighteenth century was, for the most part, clever, vivacious and superficial. It was an art neither of the people nor for the people. With the passing of the mediæval guilds the plebeian mind ceased to count. Literature and painting were made to express the tastes and sensibilities of the élite, fastidiously withdrawn from the shocks of vulgar reality. It was an age of facile but frivolous culture and accomplishment, of facile but absolutely false connoisseurship, in short the age of the dilettante and his debonair trifling — just to pass the time, you know — the ennui of superfluous time. The classics were quite the rage but brought up to date: Homer done up by Mr. Pope in neat little parcels of rhymed couplets, and in France, the gods and goddesses of Boucher sporting amorously on the walls of my lady's boudoir, Olympian, but in name only, resembling rather the fashionable pretty creatures that moth-like fluttered to the royal flame. Nature also was much admired but not in its unadorned roughness — oh, no, no! —

trained of course in parks and gardens to an effect tout à fait rococo yet simple enough to set off by contrast the distinction of lords and ladies playing at country-life in their diverting way. I never see the paintings of Fragonard without a renewed sense of the pity of it — the pity of so much technical knowledge and skill frittered away on confetti and confectionery. Thought was despised. Emotion was in bad taste. The aim of art was to depict the life of fashion, glazing the sensuality that was so much a part of it with a glamorous mist — couleur de rose. In his book on French art, Brownell pointed out that although this period of Louis Quinze was in a sense romantic by reason of its riot of unrestrained caprice and its sprightliness of outward manner — yet nothing can be called romantic that is so confined by the artificial spirit of dilettantism. The difference between Giorgione and, let us say, Sir Joshua Reynolds attempting the "grand manner" is the difference between the romance of personal inspiration and the sobering futility of attempting to be romantic when the labouring mind is merely sentimental. But the spirit and substance of the very attractive English painting of the period was virile when compared to the effeminacy affected in France. There the cleverness of painters was inherent, but their whimsical swagger of style, their improvising brilliancy of invention, by no means proof of their having freed themselves from

convention. It was now the fashion for painting to be capricious. Antoine Watteau had set this latest fashion.

To say that Watteau, like Giorgione, supplied a demand, anticipating the desire of his contemporaries, does not necessarily imply, as has been frequently asserted, that his art is the mirror of his age. On the contrary — his art, like Giorgione's, reflected nothing so much as his own personality — a temperament particularly sensitive to surrounding influences and at the same time wrapped in a revery from which there was for him no waking. He was really a solitary, a doomed consumptive, and in spite of the fact that his pictures inaugurated an epoch and anticipated modern art, I have my doubts whether he was really trying to do anything more than just to pass the time, like his fashionable patrons, and make himself meanwhile as comfortable in his dreams as it was possible to be in so sad a state of mental rebellion and physical dissolution. It is obvious that Pater, Lancret, Boucher, Fragonard, and the rest were following his lead, carrying on what might reasonably be called the School of Watteau. But what with these imitators had become so vapid and gaudy a style of decoration had been for the man of genius merely the most convenient vehicle within reach for his poignant self-expression. We must of course regret that the frail poet-painter did not break away from the artificiality that almost

mastered him, that he did not overcome the weakness of will that kept his work so strictly "à la mode." But Watteau was too timid a man to run counter to public taste. He was ever ready to follow the line of least resistance. Since the dainty and the chic were the effects sought after then he would create effects dainty and chic. But in so doing he would express, not the mere emptiness of his subject, when devoid of personal inspiration, but the fullness of his personal inspiration in spite of the emptiness of his subject. From the Italian operas and country parties of the aristocracy and their life of vain amusement, he would evoke a realm of his own fancy — a realm exquisite with shimmering stuffs of delicate tint, with lovely faces and mandolin music, with woodland picnics and lingering sunsets, with garden comedies fantastic without grossness and gay amours flirtatious without guile; a realm in which a sick dreamer could share in the essence of all things dainty and chic and in the spirit of make-believe forget his disillusionment and despair. It is the hint we are sure to get of moods that perhaps the painter himself never quite understood, the suggestion we are sure to find that his Fêtes Galantes were but symbols of his sad day-dreams that cause the pictures of Watteau to vibrate with more depth of feeling than we would expect from the sparkling colour-melodies he composed. With this dreamer of dreams self-expression consisted in

self-concealment, never furtively in a dark disguise, but always with a certain melancholy blitheness, in the most becoming masquerade.

I find a fascinating resemblance between the style and spirit of Watteau's art and the poems of certain European and English writers of to-day. Some of the modern men that I have in mind have been named by one of their own cult — Symbolists. The title will do as well as any other to suggest the purpose of this decorative phase of impressionistic poetry. The symbolist acknowledges that all is mystery and that all is rhythm; that we are all in a dream and that nothing is certain save only that time flies and that its beautiful moments can only be perpetuated though the various symbols of art. It was the purpose of the ancient Chinese and Japanese painters to make their images expressive not of things but of thoughts. Whether they celebrated the storm in the mountains, or the watchful, many-handed Goddess of Mercy, or the song of a little bird on a tree — mystery was the constant theme. Then the means of expression had also to be mysterious, the colour and form made to vanish in the emotional suggestion. To this symbolism modern artists have been returning. They realize that form is not the end but only the means — that technique must be mastered so that it may no longer be obtrusive and obvious, so that, as in the best music, spirit and substance may be one. And so we find prose

that affects us like an invisible orchestra and poetry that is like bird song, verse in which, as Symons said of Verlaine "the words startle us by their delicate resemblance to thoughts, by their winged flight from so far, by their alighting so close." With the same attentive simplicity with which he found words for sensations of hearing Verlaine also found words for the sensations of the soul — the finer shades of feeling. And that is just the perfection of decorative imagination which, in the dilettante eighteenth century, Watteau, the inspired dilettante, was able to achieve. His Fêtes Galantes are the symbols of his own moods, and the philosophy of his art he summed up in one small figure — "L'Indifferent" of the Louvre. That graceful young cavalier is chiefly charming by reason of the lurking ennui back of his debonair abandon, the vague sadness disguised in sprightly silver and rose. And this prevailing mood — though ever so frail and fugitive a thing, seems Watteau's most alluring quality to our appreciative, unimaginative age. In many ways has he influenced modern art. Was he not the first to recognize the prismatic brilliancy of the atmosphere — the first to combine the realistic zeal of Rubens in the study of light and air, with the romantic ardour of Giorgione in the evocation of the personal sentiment? Yet for all his spirited draughtsmanship and vivacious colour, it is the successful *symbolism* of Watteau that makes him most interesting to

modernity — his inspired discovery of a peculiarly subtle means of expressing his peculiarly subtle mood. And the mood itself — the mood of romantic comedy — is one that we moderns are able to understand. Modern poetry has been much charmed by it.

Impressionism in poetry is concerned with the production of *effects*, sometimes imitative of other arts, always suggestive of intimate emotions. Watteau's spirit has been translated into verse by almost every poet who is any way sensitive to painting. No one has done this quite so perfectly as Verlaine in his "Fêtes Galantes." Arthur Symons sympathetically rendered the lyrics into English. Here is one of them.

"The singers of serenades
Whisper their faded vows
Unto fair, listening maids
Under the swaying boughs.

Tircis, Aminte are there,
Clitandre is over-long,
And Damis for many a fair
Tyrant makes many a song.

. . . . . .

And the mandolines and they
Faintlier breathing swoon
Into the rose and gray
Ecstasy of the moon."

Of such a dulcet sweetness is Watteau's luxury of secret pain. The spiritual quality of the colours

we only dimly apprehend, and the enchanting forms of gentle blonde beauties and their gracious lovers, we remember, but only as images of sleep. Yet the spirit of the artist who loved the forest trees and open spaces, who waited for the dusk all of the day, and mused of day as at last the shadows lengthened, something of this spirit is here preserved.

It may well be argued that to find only melancholy in Watteau's paintings is sentimentally to read into his art what we have read about his life — a schoolgirl's privilege. After all, the pictures are outwardly gay and most lovers of Watteau are drawn to him not because he vaguely oppresses the heart but because he lightly refreshes the mind. Detached, by reason of his illness, from participation in the social life that he depicted, Watteau was the better able to realize his dream, deliberately to emphasize the sheer pictorial charm of it, and close his eyes to its vulgarities and vices. Curiously — that is exactly the point of view from which Mr. Austin Dobson so delightfully celebrates the glamour of the eighteeth century. This modern dilettante lives in a little world of his own making: a brilliant little world of powdered wigs, of lovely ladies and their lords forever bowing and ogling, at the play, or a-Maying in some old-world garden redolent of box and rose. For the air is ever of May. Oh it is altogether too good to have *ever* been true — the poet's pretty ballet-land. And

the poet knows it. With Watteauesque graces of thought and style, it is his pleasure to strut about with ruffled elegance and flash of steel; to play with the beautiful Pompadour's fan, heedless of the naughty Pompadour's fame.

> In teacup times — the style of dress
> *Would* suit your beauty, I confess!
> Belinda like — the patch you'd wear!
> I picture you with powdered hair,
> You'd make a charming shepherdess,
> And I no doubt could well express
> Sir Plume's complete conceitedness,
> Could poise a clouded cane with care,
> In teacup times.

It is the very voice of grown-up make-believe — the kind that attitudinizes in fancy dress and luxuriates in play-acting.

Not so very long ago the great French dramatist Edmond Rostand wrote a clever satire on the folly of young people dream-dazed by all the bosh and bombast of moonshiny melodrama. Yet in the course of presenting the idea, there was abundant evidence to prove that the satirist was himself a Romanesque revelling in the actual stage-properties of romance. In fact, before the last curtain, appreciating the futility of further evasion, the poet makes his little Sylvette trip to the footlights, and confide the sentiment that lies behind the satire.

SYLVETTE

Et maintenant nous quatre
Excusons ce que fut la pièce — en un rondel
Des costumes claires — des rimes légères
L'Amour dans un parc, jouant le fluteau.

STRAFOREL

Des coups de soleil, des rayons lunaires
Un bon spadassin en joyeux manteau.

PERCINET

Un repos naif des pieces amères
Un peu de musique — un peu de Watteau.
Un spectacle honnête et qui finit tôt
Un vieux mur fleuri — deux amants, deux pères.

SYLVETTE (*dans une reverence*)

Des costumes claires — des rimes légères.

. . . . . .

As I was emerging from the crowd after hearing "Les Romanesque" at the Théâtre Français last summer I heard an old gentleman, who was crossing the street just behind me, muttering to himself — "Nos costumes claires, nos rimes légères — ah mais c'etait ravissant." He was right.

The mellow masquerading spirit then of Watteau's art has been the inspiration, not only of Paul Verlaine and other seekers after old effects and new sensations, but has also exerted the dominant influence over such totally different phases of impressionism as the delicate porcelain-poetry of Austin Dobson and the playful garden-comedy with which Rostand appropriately

introduced himself as a romancer to our appreciative, unimaginative age. Watteau's revery was always far away from the world of things as they are. Although he dwelt by preference in a paradise of mundane beauty etherealized — even the atmosphere of comic opera delighted his lighter hours. As a child he was fascinated by the strolling players who performed on great occasions in the streets of Valenciennes. Then and there perhaps he learned the æsthetic possibilities of the fantastic. Life was always for him a spectacle that afforded him tender visions and complicated emotions. Nothing ever really happens on the stage of Watteau's little theatre. But the eye finds the rest it seeks in those bosky glades of russet and green, and the lovely colours of the players' costumes amply compensates for their listlessness. They are all idly dreaming, the sweet young people — dreaming of their secret hopes — watching the dawn or perhaps the dusk of sentiment reflected in each other's eyes. And beyond a little pool deep-shadowed by encircling trees, through a clearing in the drowsy wood the smouldering sunset glows, like passion stilled at evening. It is perhaps the romanticist's highest function to symbolize the more dreamful qualities of human emotion. He believes that when we escape from Fact to find solace in Fantasy — when we create by means of our decorative imagination a more congenial world than reality in which to dwell, then our dreams, however fantas-

tic, our art whatever its symbol of expression, has become for us the truest truth. And so it is the truth of Watteau's sentiment, no less than his illusion of a land beyond place and time, that moves us. For surely there is nothing more true than weariness, and nothing more true than the desire for beauty, and it was out of the blending of these truths that the romantic comedy of Watteau was made.

XVII

IMPRESSIONISM AND THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT

I HAVE been reading a new volume of essays that certainly ought to be popular since it is full of pleasant humour and genial, genuine intimacy of wholesome comment. The essayist, F. R. Martin, remarks that "it is such an interesting world if you get the hang at all of what is going on in it. I do love to see it roll along and to try to puzzle out why things happen as they do." Now that is exactly the impressionistic point of view applied to life in general by the average, colloquial, appreciative human being. The impressionist in life is often the lovable type of man — you know him — who is interested in almost everything, who when he is bored has the sense to be interested even in that detestable state of mind. Or it may be that he is a specialist. Perhaps he goes home to indulge a fad. God help the man who isn't a little daft about something or somebody! Then again he may be one of the high strung temperaments, the eager sort of youth who, in Stevenson's words, "dreams of marriage on summer Sundays when the bells ring, or cannot sleep for the desire of living!" Stevenson himself was of this variety.

Or, he may be like Keats, a worshipper of the principle of beauty in all things, or like Browning, whose horizon of interest was not bounded by the glorious distances of his own great art but by the far heights of music and of painting. Of course the impressionist in art is, to a certain extent, the detached spectator of life's spectacle, himself quite consciously an actor on the scene, like Hamlet philosophizing to Horatio. But this detachment must not imply a distaste for the point of view of others. Unless there is a comprehensive and naturally expansive humanity in an artist, however true to himself he may try to be, his art will seem none the less artificial and cold. To be true to self is essential of course; but to be openminded and openhearted, these are the first requisites.

A word or two then for the open road — the highway of impressionism. There is much to be said for the wisdom of the vagabond, the man who doesn't want to arrive because he wants to "keep moving." If you ask him where he is going he will probably answer you, with a dancing eye, that he is on his way to see what it looks like around that bend in the lane. When he has taken the turn, the view will beckon him up a hill, into a deep dark wood where the sunset fires are flickering, and it will be a joy for him there to sniff the cool of the evening and the pungent scent of wood smoke rising through the dusk. And so it will be on and on into the hush

of nightfall, with rest at last by some "talking water" and many stars to see. There is no use in bewailing the glamour that is cast over the gipsy trail and the irresponsible vagaries of vagabonds. If there is anything attractive at all about us it is that we are living beings with personalities very much like other animals. Every now and then we need to escape from our domestication, to forget, for awhile, that we are civilized creatures with office hours and party manners. Once upon a time we were Nomads. Before that we wandered in packs. Now-a-days when we wander off the beaten track we have at least clothes to wear and consciences to care for. And so let us return at times to our beginnings, in feeling if not in fact. If we become savages and brutes then that is what we are, nothing worse. If our souls are right, then we are all the better, God knows, for having sensed the elemental, for having felt something virile in the blood that bounds from the heart. No wonder we have story book heroes like Locke's Paragot and Stevenson's Berthelini and Synge's Tramp, in the "Shadow of the Glen," for although the idle boy's hero ought to kill dragons or make a mint of money, it is right that the busy man's hero should be a care-free elemental sort of fellow with a roaring love of life and a fellowship that knows neither pride nor prejudice. What would become of lyric poetry without the breed of men who sang from sheer overflow of high spirits, from the

mediæval Troubadours of Italy and Provence down to old Walt Whitman and our beloved Tusitala and that other exquisite artist who died young— Richard Hovey. All of them have sung us rousing songs to hearten us when we carry a pack or come face to face with danger. Some of them, too, have sung us gentler melodies, to remind us that not only the strength of man but the poignant tenderness of woman abides at Nature's heart. With his body alive and aglow, with his mind alert and his every sense awake, the man who wanders the open road just for the joy of wandering symbolizes the impressionistic point of view in art and in life.

The impressionist in life sees and feels and lives a great deal but he does not always know how to express himself about the variety and beauty and strangeness of it all. If, however, he is also an artist, it is his privilege to be able to convert experience into expression, to see a thing definitely and give it just the form and colour it has assumed in his mind, to think a thought clearly or feel a mood keenly and search for the exact words that will convey his shade of meaning or tone of emotion. It wouldn't have done Stevenson much good to be a master of language if his unfailing sense of words had been applied to observations and reflections unsympathetic to his readers. It is because of the breadth of his humanity that we are enabled to appreciate the perfection of his art. A page, almost at random, from Steven-

son's essays is a page of as complete a joy to the average right-minded person as any other page in all literature. It is the very talk of an attractive man of the world talking just a little better than anyone ever talked before; the thought of a quick thinker with a quality of mind so bewitching that it almost charms us into luxurious inattention; the cadenced and felicitous phrases of a prose poet who thrills us as we listen; best of all, the voice of a favourite friend who understands us so well he can read our minds and moods and say just what we so much wanted to say ourselves, but couldn't. Original? No, scarcely more so than the average. Originality is far to seek and seldom worth its isolation. But an artist who is also an impressionist is never at a loss to present an old eternal thing in a new and beautiful way.

One could correctly say that the essential Stevenson was not the writer but the man, if one qualified the statement by admitting that the man was absolutely and at all times the writer. The often quoted passage where perhaps he reveals his own gallant soul most clearly and confidentially is also one of the passages I would select to show the colour and texture of his conscious and cultivated but none the less enchanting style. "It is better to live and be done with it than to die daily in the sick room. By all means begin your Folio even if the doctor does not give you a year. Even if he hesitates about a month

at least make one brave push and see what can be accomplished in a week. A spirit goes out of the man who means execution, which outlives the most untimely ending. All who have meant good work with their whole hearts have done good work, though they die before they have the time to sign it. Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful influence behind it in the world and bettered the tradition of mankind. And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall, and in mid-career, laying out vast projects and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope, their mouths full of boastful language, yet is there not something brave and spirited in such a termination. . . . For surely at whatever age it overtakes a man, this it is to die young. Death has not been suffered to take so much as an illusion from the heart. In the hot fit of life — a tiptoe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound, on to the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, the happy-starred, fullblooded creature shoots into the spiritual land." That is the philosophy of the romancer expressed in the language of the impressionist, the philosophy of a man whose zest was never that of the epicure, but of the highminded hero of life's spiritual adventure.

If we are impressionists in life Stevenson in-

sisted that we may also become impressionists in art. It is only a question of whether we care enough about self-expression to devote our very lives to it. There are many critics who claim that Browning was not an artist. It is unquestionably true that he cared less for art in the sense of careful workmanship than he did for his theme, the analysis and interpretation of human character. His art was to represent souls; souls being made and marred by contact with environment and experience. Even his own point of view was too limited for so great an intellect, for so deep a sympathy. Therefore he often chose to reveal other men's minds through their own self-revelations in drama and dramatic monologue. But this psychology would have fallen short of its lyric loveliness and of its dramatic power had it not been subjected to a sensitive art of metrical impressionism, an art which anticipated and inspired many subtleties and delicacies of modern verse. No painter has adapted his brushwork to his subject with more unerring instinct for the means to a desired effect than Browning in his selection of metres. He knew how to suggest complexities of mood, how to imitate varieties of movement, the gait of horses for instance, or the slow tread of marchers. His modulations of a continued rhythmic utterance in "The Ring and The Book" deftly mark the drift of changing thoughts, the darks and lights of controlled and uncontrolled emotions. His

landscape backgrounds give one actual physical sensations. If anything could have made that wretched "Serenade at the Villa" more mortifying to the serenader, it was the apathy of the sullen night.

> "Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
> Sultrily suspired for proof;
> In at heaven and out again
> Lightning! where it broke the roof
> Blood-like, a few drops of rain."

But quickly I turn for relief to "Love among the Ruins" where the impressionism is less obviously clever but none the less successful and oh, so charming! There I bask in the late light that mellows wide historic distances. And I listen to the tinkle of sheep bells. And I try to think of the splendours of the vanished city but I am human

> "And I know while thus the quiet coloured eve
> Smiles to leave
> To their folding all our many tinkling fleece
> In such peace.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
> Waits me there
> In the turret where the charioteers caught soul
> For the goal
> When the King looked — where she looks now
> Breathless, dumb,
> Till I come."

Even if it were but a sentiment; even if one had to live such an hour to believe such a truth, who would dare to deny that

"With their triumphs and their glories and the rest
Love is best."

But here the impressionism of metre is used for emotional rather than for intellectual effect. In other poems the past is not dismissed so lightly but made to live again with a dramatic synthesis that is nothing short of miracle. Listening to a Toccata of Galuppi's the poet sees a vision of the dazzling world of eighteenth-century Venice, frivolous and yet fascinating as he apprehends it in the cold music which must have sobered for a moment all who listened to its coldness,

"Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm
in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to midday
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow
Do you say?

. . . . . .

Well and it was graceful of them, they'd break talk off and
afford —
She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to finger on his sword
When you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord."

But this poem is only an improvisation — a fanciful modern mood for pleasantly visualizing the past. Its refined and sparkling delicacy of touch recalls the art of Guardi. It is a com-

mentary upon the times, not a re-incarnation. No mere metrical impressionism can reconstruct the soul of a dead century, can breathe its breath, and live its life and think its thought, as the Past is passionate true in such poems as "My Last Mistress" — "Pictor Ignotus" — Fra Lippo Lippi" — "Andrea del Sarto" — "The Bishop Orders his Tomb" — "The Confessional" and "The Laboratory." Beholding them in their moments of self-revelation Browning created portraits which contain complicated personalities; what these men and women really were in relation to their age and environment, what they might have been had things been otherwise, the springs of character from which resulted the destiny of events, the seeds of thought from which grew up the beautiful or poisonous flowers of their inner lives.

The luxurious art patron of the Italian Renaissance stands among his guests, vividly revealed, in "My Last Duchess." In calling attention to his treasures he stops in front of the portrait of his young wife, and smiling sumptuously, he relates how it was she brought about her own fate.

"She had
A heart, how shall I say? too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed. She liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush at least. She thanked men, good! but thanked
Somehow, I know not how, as if she ranked
My gift of a nine hundred years' old name
With anybody's gift. . . .
Oh, Sir, she smiled no doubt
Whene'er I passed her — but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew. I gave commands
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below. Nay, nay, we'll go
Together down, Sir. Notice Neptune though
Taming a sea horse — thought a rarity
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me."

Could anything be more true? The mimetic quality is astounding. And the characters are life itself; the jealousy of the tyrant, a beast of all his culture, and the young, young wife whose smiles were broadcast. Only Shakespeare and that impressionistic romancer George Meredith equalled Browning in the poetic portraiture of women.

Not only was Browning the poet of men's moments of self-revelation, but of that "psychological moment" which has now passed into the currency of our common speech. As Walter Pater put it, "the poetry of Browning is pre-eminently the poetry of situations," the poetry of critical periods when a soul is put suddenly to the test.

"I count life just the stuff
To try the soul's strength on,
Educe the man."

But these trials are not brought about with entangling complications involving action but with the inner struggles of the soul that precede and at the critical moments precipitate all consequent actions. Browning was too staunch an optimist and too virile a moralist to rant against Destiny and overpowering circumstance. Fate can do no more than test us. Our ordeal comes not without but within. The spiritual life interested Browning; not abstract Man's relation to the other world but the capacity or incapacity of men to deal with the problems and passions of this world, here and now, to rise or fall, succeed or fail, not according to the world's standards of success and failure, but measured only by the degree of strength and purity in their innermost thoughts and purposes. Consequently the poet of this inner life was the poet not only of situations, but of situations involving relationships with others, the poet of love, of friendship, of jealousy, of hate, of cold indifference, of sad misunderstanding, of imperfect sympathies. He could sing, as well as any other, the simpler feelings, but his peculiar quality of intellect liked to fathom deeper and darker springs of emotion; the moods for instance of a constant wife when she feels her husband's gradual estrangement, her outcry of primitive feeling when she consents with a little struggle to

submerge her individuality in her husband's, to be his woman, body and soul. In that exquisitely subtle poem "Two in the Campagna" it is the husband who speaks. He loves her, his mate, but never quite understands her, never quite attains to that spiritual union which alone can make lovers happy. It is the pity of it, this world of distance, our ineffectual desires to grasp elusive thought, to perpetuate moments of feeling, to realize our ideals, to be true to the best in ourselves and others that makes this life so sad with

> "Infinite passion and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn."

Love, however, once attained, means strength for the day's need. And by love I mean that spirit of love which, incarnate in Browning's "Pippa" passes singing on its way through the world, spreading, all unconsciously, its goodness and happiness and vital hope. This is the secret of the impressionistic point of view. We are social creatures, dependent upon each other. No matter how original, how self-sufficient, how selfish, what other people have made us, that we are, and that in our turn we shall make other people. For personalities are inevitably acting and reacting upon each other, ideas growing out of ideas, and impressions born constantly from impressions.

In spite of his absorption in crucial situations and spiritual relationships Browning was seldom

just the impersonal spectator. Generally he had something definite to say. From his selected observations of character and conduct under stress of selected circumstances, his own philosophy was sure to emerge seeking through the evidence of each individual case to approach the universal truth. He was the poet of music, of painting, of science, of Paganism, Classicism, Christianity, and then of nearly every important human emotion. But it is perhaps as the poet of love that he seems most soul searching, most incomparable. It was his passionate concern that men and women should not miss this crowning opportunity of their lives. Over and over again he pictured the situation of a love that might have been, but failed to be, through some shy resistance or doubt or fear or worldly prudence at the critical stage of the relation and two lives ruined in consequence. In such poems as "By the Fireside" he gives us the reverse, the perfect joy resulting from the insight and strength which captures love at the psychological moment and fuses spirit and sense in harmony forever.

"Oh the little more and how much it is
And the little less and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play
And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it — still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her,

Friends — lovers that might have been.
But a moment after and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast,
We knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life. We were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen."

That is the romance of Browning's own life and it is also the soul of his philosophy. Love is the goal — and if it is true and deep, whether or not it attains its object in this life, it is pure gain spiritually. Evelyn Hope dies before she knows how wonderfully a man loves her. She was too young to know. But when she awakens she will find the leaf he has given her for remembrance — and then she will understand. "The Last Ride Together" is a song of faith. Had the moment indeed been made eternal, had she loved him, had it not been the last ride, then what would the future have held in reserve?

"Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now heaven and she are beyond this ride."

This exultation of spirit and actual joy in the incompleteness of success on earth is applied not only to young love but to all our finer aspirations and endeavors, to whatever has made our existence worthy of reward. Such optimism is really the most romantic spirit ever expressed in literature, disregarding, as it does, every other consideration save only the instinctive faith that

"The All Great is the All Loving too"

and all shall be well with us sooner or later. Like all things romantic it can be laughed to scorn. It is nothing but the spirit of romantic comedy, the view of life as spiritual adventure, applied with a vigorous, full-blooded enjoyment to life's most sacred intimacies.

In this last paper I have tried to forge the connecting link between the apparently separate themes of this book — between Impressionism and The Decorative Imagination, between the artist who is striving for unity of effect and the artist who produces that effect, not so much for its own sake, as for the sake of a perhaps subconscious yet devoutly cherished philosophy of life. All the isms of representative art may be included under the title Impressionism. Alike the Realists, the Optical Illusionists, the Symbolists, the Harmonists and the Romanticists have been Impressionists or they have been failures. In literature we have seen that the impressionistic point of view is not the only possible philosophy, as it is with painters. Nevertheless the lyrical poets, the dramatists, the dramatic poets, the short story writers, and the subjective critics, were also failures if they did not desire to express single impressions, or were unable to express them synthetically. It is pitiful the wealth of good working material, of clever men, able-bodied men, wasted in the name of art, when there was no art in them! If we could only induce a few million misguided mortals to give up art, at least

until they have begun to understand the spirit of art, then we would have fewer bad books, and plays and buildings and statues and pictures, and a public better able to discriminate between art and artifice. But of all the artists who do succeed in their function of impressionism, the ones who have, it seems to me, the largest conception of their work, the farthest vision of their hope, are the men who use the personal expression of art, not as an end in itself, but as a means, to enrich and ennoble life with spiritual stimulus, or at least to sensuously appeal to the imagination and the emotions. Browning was such an Impressionist and I have lingered over his art in this discussion because he so successfully employed his impressionistic point of view and method of expression in the cause of his own "dream of a world." It is a world in which his Men and Women are on life's stage, performing its romantic comedy, missing or grasping their opportunities, strengthening or weakening their spiritual forces in the fight with circumstance, realizing in the richer moments of experience that it is a glorious thing to live fearlessly and uprightly, to love and to be loved, to labour onward and upward, aspiring to the attainment of that divine fulfillment, when, at the last, their ideals shall be realized, and all their souls made perfect.

Because the thought of Browning was often difficult, sometimes eccentric, and at all times boldly individual, it is commonly supposed that

he is the poet of the intellectual few, not of the irresistible many. This is a great mistake. His philosophy is exceptional only because of the exceptional inspiration which conveys its courageous but familiar optimism. It is a philosophy not for the recluse and the dreamer but for the man who loves life and lives it to the full, taking and giving blows in the thick of battle, "falling to rise again," "baffled to fight better," "never doubting clouds will break." It is the philosophy of our unspoken idealism, the staunch spirit which serves us when we are facing odds with our backs to the wall, which makes us calm with hope even when our friends are pitying us, which enables us to fight on even after hope is dead, trusting in some ultimate justice, in some unfailing love. One of the most powerful creations of impressionistic art, inspired directly by this aggressive and yet debonaire optimism is Rembrandt's large portrait of himself, in his old age and poverty, now the chief treasure of the Frick Collection. All of his life Rembrandt had been the Impressionist, with his zest for life, his eagerness for self-expression, his knowing eye for single effects. But back of all that he had also been the Romanticist, with his deliberate purpose to express only richness of effect, only depths of observation, only the beauty or the mystery of truth. His best portraits, landscapes and genre studies, are no more accurately true to his own contemporary Holland than his biblical pictures

are true to the words of scripture and the facts of ancient history. It was universal humanity he painted, and Beauty that knows neither time nor place. Whenever there was a story or a scene from the bible which appealed to his imagination, to his keen sense of mysticism and Oriental glamour, he saw his pictorial opportunity. With Eastern finery and armour, which he found in the shops of sea-faring Amsterdam, and with the available Jews of the neighbourhood as his models, he proceeded to paint those golden visions in which a beam of light, traversing a vaulted vastness of templed gloom, seemed to obliterate colour and form and yet reveal a sensuous magnificence greater than the world's wealth has zest enough to afford. Alas for the artist! his taste for collecting and for living in sumptuous surroundings brought on his day of reckoning. First of all he lost his Saskia, the young wife he loved so, the Saskia who sits laughing on his knee in the popular picture. Then other reverses came. He painted more and more just to please himself, and his orders became fewer. But his genius ripened in his hour of trial. He told now the story of the New Testament in a new way, not the splendour of its setting but the significance of its story, the story of redemption through love, of sympathy for all. The very souls of men and women look out from the eyes of his portraits and in his own self-studies we are enabled to share the deepest thoughts of this man, whose pride

was not broken by failure, whose spirit conquered circumstance. In the Frick portrait he sits as on a throne, old, sick, shabby, yet triumphant. Fate may do its worst. He defies it. Some day men will know that in his chosen way no man ever did better. Conscious of his deathless genius — believing in some ultimate justice, in some unfailing love, his eyes bear a challenge. After death — judgment? Let it come.

It is a curious truth known to all art lovers, that when an impressionistic style expresses a romantic spirit it is difficult to distinguish one quality from the other. Rembrandt's magic of arbitrary light and shade is of course exactly what we mean when we speak of his impressionism, in other words his art of producing desired effects, but it is also exactly what we mean when we speak of the romance of his personal vision. He employed this magic to reveal the secret of a troubled soul, or the inner beauty of a landscape, or the richness of a dream of colour. Colour modulated by light and shade, this was the technique which interpreted his moods. Nature or human nature, darkening or lightening in moments of elemental exposure, this was the thought which dominated his soul. It is impossible then to separate the man from the artist. When Stevenson said that the particular triumph of the artist is "not simply to convince but to enchant," he meant that an impressionist should also be a romanticist. It is of course a matter of opinion

— a question of taste. Of course conviction is more indispensable to enchantment than enchantment to conviction. It is only by reason of his perfect genius that Corot enchants us with landscapes which are, after all, conventional in composition, neither altogether fanciful nor altogether real, and of a sameness in tone, sentiment and subject. Colour chords in silver and dark green, the harmony of wind-stirred leaves and glistening dew, the essence of all that is delicious in misty dawns and twilight in the woods, willows that cast their shade where the ripples play along the still waters of a little lake, a distant villa luminous with sunset, a shepherd piping to the late lingering afternoon; these are the only general impressions that the name of Corot conjures up. But they are impressions that the world cannot do without. No wonder those little dream-people dance and frolic in the glade, mad with the witchery of it all. For it is Fairyland, the Fairyland, of an enchanter whose enchantment was impressionism, the Fairyland of the good old Corot whose jovial pipe-dreams transfigured Reality and whose incomparable eyesight realized Romance. Once more I must quote Stevenson, "Mirth, lyric mirth, and a vivacious Classical contentment, these qualities are of the very essence of the better kind of art."

But perhaps the most interesting thing about a Corot landscape is that it makes us feel that the beauty of the scene is evanescent and about

THE GOAT-HERD

By Corot

to disappear. In another moment all will be changed. The hush will be broken. The fairy footfalls will cease. The light will fade away, or grow, and lose its tenderness. That exquisite colour in the sky, it cannot linger. For all things pass, the fairies of our dreams, our youth itself, and music, and sunsets, and those twilights in the woods when our wistful souls are at rest. It is not Death we think of but simply Change, like sleeping and waking. We are happy in Corot's Borderland, but happy with the vague unrest, the vain regret we feel in listening to music. Spirit and sense are at one, but only for moments. Art marvellously perpetuates these moments, but art itself must change. Why then the spirit of romantic comedy which Corot symbolized with wood nymphs dancing in the dawn, or the shepherd piping to the late lingering afternoon? It is the indomitable instinct of buoyant faith, smoking and singing at its work, the same faith which made Abt Vogler sure that his palace of music would abide.

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist,
Not its semblance, but itself. No beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When Eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky —
Are music sent up to God — by the lover and the bard.
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by."

It is exactly because of life's pitiless chance and change, its heart-breaking incompleteness of attainment here and now, that we may be sure, with "lyric mirth and vivacious classical contentment" that the end of our fugitive impressions, the end of our spiritual adventure, is not yet.